

Revealed: **Silver – the shining force of PC RPGs**

REVIEWS: SPYRO THE DRAGON **METAL GEAR SOLID** PARASITE EVE **GUNBULLET 2**

PREVIEWS: RIDGE RACER 4 **SONIC ADVENTURE** R-TYPE DELTA **CARMAGEDDON 2**

FEATURES: NEXT GEN [illegible] **PROJECT X** HOWARD LINCOLN **DEATH OF THE ARCADE**


5★ CODE 393636/560337
HB



Three years in the making, this month's cover game, *Silver*, is one of the most unusual productions **Edge** has seen in some time. The work of Infogrames UK's in-house development team, it cribs from established Japanese gaming values and succeeds in introducing its own distinctive content to the mix. The project was almost canned at one point during its evolution, but Infogrames kept the faith, and the result (showcased on pages 44-48) could represent a brave new direction for British videogame development.

Silver was just one of the games presented at this year's ECTS at Olympia, holding its own against a bewildering, almost stifling array of other titles. If the event didn't necessarily deliver what it promised in software terms (see p6), it did give **Edge** the opportunity to once again lock horns with some of the most visionary designers working today (see p68).

Returning from ECTS, **Edge** finally took delivery of a finished build of a game first previewed here nearly two years ago – *Metal Gear Solid* (see p78). A landmark title in various respects, it illustrates the very best aspects of Japanese game design, and hints that the future of videogaming lies with titles bearing ambitious adventurous leanings.

Today's gamers are becoming harder to please. As well as being able to see through incompetent graphics engines, they're also becoming critical of wafer-thin plots, lazy characterisation and limited interaction.

Despite being creations from opposite sides of the globe, titles such as *Silver* and *Metal Gear Solid* reveal that, irrespective of their territory, game developers are working towards similar goals.

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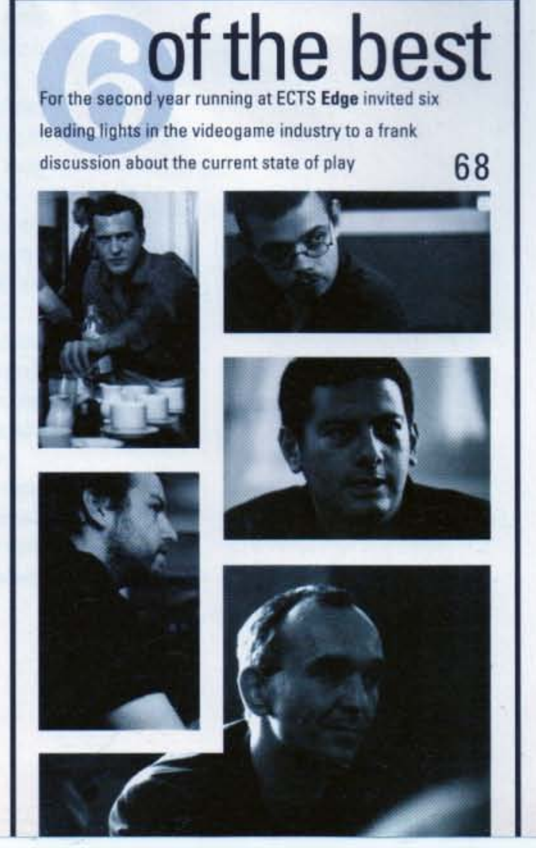
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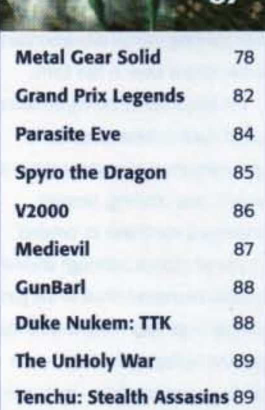
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TESTSCREEN

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SONIC BOOM BOY 36

Having failed to equal his Mega Drive success on the Saturn, Sonic has his sights set on Dreamcast

PRESCREENS 13

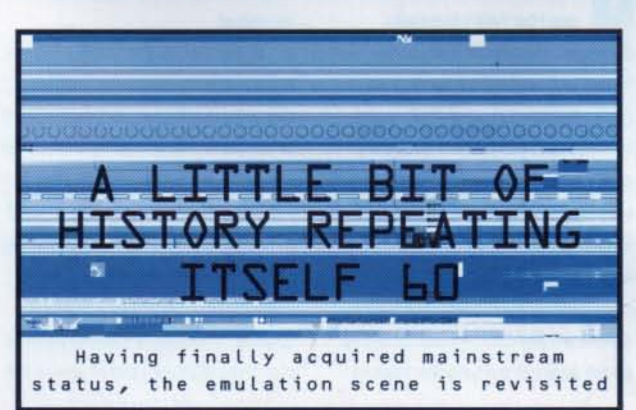
More Dreamcast software in *Blue Stinger* and *Pen Pen Trilcelon*. Plus, *Ridge Racer Type 4* screams on to the PlayStation





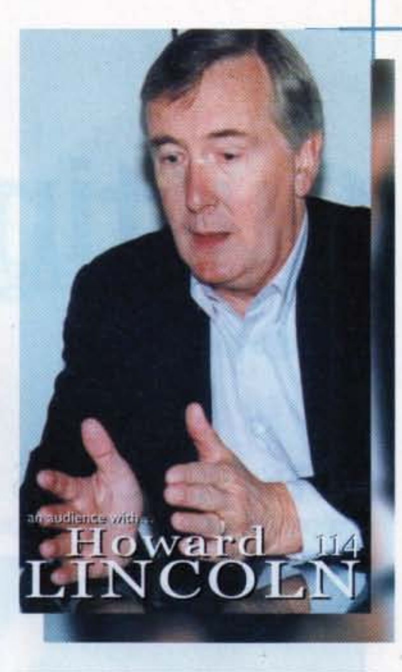
STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS 40

Sporting a contemporary aesthetic overhaul, could this represent the next evolution in strategy combat?



A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF 60

Having finally acquired mainstream status, the emulation scene is revisited



Cutting Edge

The latest news from the world of interactive entertainment

ECTS '98 BOASTS RECORD ATTENDANCE

A strong international presence shows new confidence in Euro markets, but are the creative juices drying up?







This was the biggest ECTS to date, with a record (unaudited) attendance of 21,297 visitors from 55 countries over the three days. The event became almost like a consumer affair at times, especially when Ms Croft appeared...

If one word were needed to describe 1998's European Computer Trade Show, it would be 'hype'. From the official handbook's bombastic introduction – 'the market is vibrant and buoyant bringing great opportunity to all involved in this exciting and innovative industry' – to the fortunes obviously spent on elaborate stands, the event reeked of cash, optimism and cocky ostentation. If there are any storm clouds gathering on the edges of the software industry, they certainly weren't mentioned at the outset.

In many ways, the furore surrounding the show was justified. Out of the 1,000 or so games displayed at the event, many were receiving their European premieres and a few were actually exceptional. Among the major crowd-pullers were *Zelda 64* (justifiably taking up a fair chunk of Nintendo's biggest ever ECTS stand), *Daikatana* (looking considerably more interesting than it did last year), and of course the biggest sequel, *Tomb Raider III* (which wasn't really doing anything markedly different from its predecessors). Elsewhere, many of the developers **Edge** spoke to picked out *Outcast* as a show favourite (looking beautiful, but running a little slow), while an extended, cinematic video presentation of *Metal Gear Solid* had gamers queueing around the Konami stand for hours at a time.

Filling the aisles

The turnout of industry giants was impressive, too. Eidos, Sony, Nintendo, Acclaim and Interplay all boasted floor space, hogging megaplexes filled with 'product'. Ian Livingstone told **Edge** that this year's stand would show that Eidos is more than just a one-game company, and he was right. *Daikatana* provoked almost as much interest as *TRIII* while Red Lemon's military strategy title, *Braveheart*, Quantic Dreams' *Omikron* and Mucky Foot's free-roaming martial arts adventure *Urban Chaos* were in fine form.

In fact, most of the big exhibitors could claim to have at least one genuinely interesting game. When it wasn't busy crashing, *Messiah* impressed many with its detailed character models (although several pundits expressed doubt in the game's chubby angel as a hero), and *Lander*, created by Psygnosis' Manchester studio, looked incredible – both in terms of visuals and in *Thrust*-style gameplay. Unfortunately it was kept behind closed doors while lesser fare dominated.

But somehow, something was missing. ECTS is still suffering from PES



Publishers attempted to outdo each other with their ECTS presence. If a bundle of semi-naked girls won't do, throw in some subtle lighting effects...





Cars were a prevalent theme – along with odd hired hands

(post-E3 syndrome), with hardly any true world exclusives on show. The event also revealed how far the industry has moved away from the quest for great gameplay ideas and towards the drive for huge profits.

Cloning for cloning's sake

Almost every stand had its *Command & Conquer* clone and its firstperson shoot 'em up, all boasting revolutionary 3D visuals, all claiming not to be just another clone, but very few doing anything new or awe-inspiring.

Indeed, it is ironic that the show should happen in the same week as Rupert Murdoch's grim bid to buy Manchester United. Both this act and the startling absence of imagination at ECTS reveal how much more power share-holders have over entertainment than the people who actually strive to provide it. However, this short-sighted 'policy' will probably lead to disaster. **Edge** saw dozens of military strategy games on the show floor, but only ten per cent of them will make any real money. Meanwhile, the likes of *Grand Theft Auto* and *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* – which would have been immediately rejected by many publishers for not being 3D – rake in the cash on account of their gameplay.

New enthusiasm

However, there were pockets of hope among the bright lights. Over the road at the Hilton hotel, Peter Molyneux told **Edge** about Lionhead's satellite system – a scheme designed to give financial assistance to small start-up studios so they can make the unusual and difficult-to-pigeonhole games that the rest of the industry seems intent to kill off. **Edge** sat in a meeting room full of developers and programmers (from Lionhead and its first satellite, Big Blue Box) who talked about sharing ideas and play testing each others' work; and who had genuine understanding and enthusiasm for games. There were similar experiences at DMA's corner of the Gremlin stand, which shows that some ideas are still being generated elsewhere in the industry, too.

International elements

To a lesser extent, **Edge** was also impressed by the international flavour of the show. Dozens of American designers and industry dignitaries made it over, including key members of the *Daikatana* team, Shiny's Dave Perry, NOA's Howard Lincoln, and Wild Bill Stealey further signifying that European game development is a growing force on the global stage.

There was also a convincing Japanese contingent, symbolised by the size and prominent location of the Nintendo stand, and the arrival of SCE boss, Teruhisa Tokunaka. However, nothing much was said about the worsening economic situation in Japan and its possible effect on the games ▶



Infogrames' voxel-based adventure *Outcast* drew the admiration of many attendees, although its framerate left a little to be desired

ECTS sights...

1. Swords The hack'n'slash, D&D-style, 'Greetings, I am Spaxtor the Great, prepare to die by my sword' genre is back in full effect. **Edge** saw dozens of RPG-influenced thirdperson titles at the event, including Gremlin's *Blade* (featuring a bloody decapitation sequence), Grolier's *Asghan: The Dragon Slayer* and UbiSoft's *Heroes of Might and Magic III*. Cendant, however, took the biscuit (or should that be 'the Magical Biscuit of Glonoran'?), with three on one stand: *King's Quest*, *Diablo 2* and *Return to Krondor*. Whatever happened to the future?

2. Girls Once again, they were everywhere (see p134). Acclaim had four in black bra tops and hot pants dancing suggestively on its balcony. Konami had them in army trousers doing roughly the same thing next door, while UbiSoft had a girl in Mira Sorvino 'Fifth Element' get-up – who, judging by her awkward-looking plastic pants, will probably never walk properly again. Black leather and motor-racing pitcrew suits were also popular.

3. Cars Everyone exhibiting a racing title this year had at least one real or mocked-up vehicle on their stand. Europress had two rally cars, Codemasters had an Impreza and Nintendo featured a Jordan F1 car. Jez San wisely opted to leave his Nissan Skyline in the carpark.

4. Tanks Tank games were almost as ubiquitous as hack'n'slash titles. Among the many, DMA's *Wild Metal Country* and *Tanktics* played well. Grolier's *Tank Racer* (a splitscreen tank racing game, no less) was plain daft.

5. Celebs Yes, this year's ECTS proved to be a magnet for media starlets. Michael Owen turned up at the Eidos stand to publicise *World League Soccer '99* (now imaginatively retitled *Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99*), Bruce Lee's daughter Shannon fumbled with the controls to *Tekken 3* for a while before being swamped by eager autograph seekers, and Neil McAndrew – the new face of Lara Croft – posed for the cameras all day, never once showing an once of physical disgust as sweaty bloke after sweaty bloke had his picture taken with an arm around her. Unfortunately for gangster fans, Eidos decided at the last minute not to invite 'Mad' Frankie Fraser onto its stand to publicise *Gangsters: Organised Crime*. However, it's worth noting that this moral high-ground didn't prevent the company showing off *Playboy* centrefold Lisa Boyle as the '*Daikatana* girl'.







***Gangsters* (scary!), *Tomb Raider III* (yawn) and Michael Owen fever**

industry. In fact, the only person **Edge** heard mentioning the potential ramifications was, bizarrely enough, **Jarvis Cocker**. On stage at Monday night's Sony party, the Sheffield songster proclaimed, "This will be the last party of its kind ever. The stock markets in the east are crashing. So you'd all better get sorted for Es and whizz." A crap link to a decent song.

So ECTS '98 was a show of mixed omens. On one hand there is obviously an upbeat mood in the industry at the moment. Profits are high, business is good, and the games are coming thick and fast. But on the horizon, some industry veterans see an uncertain future – as **Peter Molyneux** admitted, "I am disappointed by the show – there are a hell of a lot of sequels out there. We're gradually spiralling into a complete lack of originality. Where are the new ideas going to come from?"



Bruce Lee's daughter Shannon was on hand to promote *Tekken 3* (main)

The final word, or lack of one, should perhaps go to DMA's eternally reticent head honcho, **David Jones**. When **Edge** asked what he had been impressed with on other stands at the show, he stood thinking for a full three minutes, looking about vaguely and scratching his chin, before finally replying. "Can I email you on Friday?", he asked apologetically.

BUY-OUT BONANZA CONTINUES

Redundancy rumours at Psygnosis as Eidos considers moving in

The recent spate of mergers, acquisitions and general dismemberment of videogame publishers has taken a new twist with rumours of Eidos Interactive's interest in a partial buy-out of Psygnosis. While neither company was prepared to make an official comment on the matter, claiming that nothing of the sort was on the cards, **Edge**'s sources reveal a slightly different picture.

Apparently Eidos staff toured the various Psygnosis studios in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Stroud to evaluate the state of titles in development. At one stage it seemed likely that Psygnosis was to be split between Eidos (which would have taken control of the Stroud and Liverpool offices) and the ambitious Infogrames group, which would have bought the remainder. However, that deal now seems unlikely to go ahead, along with a proposed (and complex) Sony-backed Eidos deal to purchase the Liverpool-based company complete. At ECTS, staff were moribund at the prospect of the final option, which would have seen Eidos take the Stroud and Liverpool branches, leaving the others facing possible redundancies.

As one source put it, "The whole thing has been three months of confusion, rumour and speculation. And nobody still has a clue what's going on." Certain development teams were reportedly keen to be sold off as, "It's a real struggle to get resources and time to develop the best games we can and Eidos was kind of seen as a new hope for everyone." However, there have been changes made to the future release schedule which have resulted in the closure of Psygnosis' San Fransisco studio with the loss of 40 jobs.

Meanwhile, Eidos has made other advances, with the acquisition of California-based developer Crystal Dynamics. **Edge** met with company founder Scott Steinberg at ECTS, where he was demonstrating the promising *Soul Reaver* (see **E**63) to select attendees. Someone, at least, is in high spirits.

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

PSYGNOSIS™

Rally comes home

Sega has at long last confirmed that two major coin-ops are being converted to Dreamcast.

Sega Rally 2 was originally a SegaPC project, but a computer version has recently been cancelled in favour of focusing all development efforts on a Dreamcast version (which, it is rumoured, will feature multiplayer gameplay via the Japanese machine's built-in modem). *Virtua Fighter TB* (Team Battle), a conversion of the enhanced *Virtua Fighter 3* coin-op, is the second title. Both games are expected to be ready at, or at least near, launch.

JAMMA: NAOMI SWEEPS IN

Crowds arrive in their thousands as Naomi steals the show



Tokyo, September 17. At the JAMMA amusement machine show, Sega unveiled its latest coin-op hardware, Naomi. Closely related to the company's imminent Dreamcast console, the new arcade board features double the RAM (32Mb) and twice the VRAM (16Mb) of Sega's home system. The rumoured multiple chipset system that NEC and VideoLogic (joint manufacturers of Dreamcast's PowerVR 2DC graphics card) claimed to be possible was nowhere to be seen – yet. New titles, from Sega and its rivals, were very much in evidence, however...

Sega's multiple arcade divisions, AM1, AM2, AM3, AM12 (previously AM Annex), all had new or recent products on display. However, it was too soon for the new AM11 group, which has been set up by *Daytona USA 2* creator Toshihiro Nagoshi with 50 staff from AM2 (including members of the *Scud Race* and *Virtua Fighter 2* and *3* teams), to have anything on show. AM11 claims to be working on a new 'low-cost' coin-op system, but given the heritage of its production staff, a 'Super Naomi' (see **E**60 news) seems far more likely.

Naomi games were definitely the talk of the town, with *House of the Dead 2*, *Blood Bullet* and *Dynamite Baseball* revealed for the first time, all from AM1. Of the three, *Blood Bullet* is the most promising, featuring *Dynamite Deka*-style gameplay and looking like a good candidate for Dreamcast conversion.

For Sega's traditional Model 3 hardware, things were business as usual. AM1 brought its new shooting game *Ocean Hunter* (see p123) to the event, AM2 had the interesting beat 'em up *SpikeOut* and AM12 was displaying *Star Wars Arcade* which thus far seems unlikely to live up to the legend. AM3's only contribution was *Dirt Devil*, as *GunBlade 2* has been delayed until later in the year, in order to avoid a clash with *Ocean Hunter*.





Sega's Naomi board (left). Naomi coin-ops will allow users to transfer data to and from Dreamcast consoles at home via the VMS units (right)

Showstoppers

Konami's sensational *Dance Dance Revolution*, a full-body version of Enix's *Bust A Move*, was a massive hit with JAMMA attendees. 'Winning' is achieved by moving yourself in time with the music, with coloured foot pads to follow, much like an over-sized Simon game. A new version of the DJ sim *Beatmania*, dubbed *3rd Mix*, was also on display, along with *Gradius 4* which looked fantastic on its widescreen plasmatron screen.

The other Japanese powerhouses – Capcom, SNK and Namco – seemed to have suffered a power cut, with little of substance on offer. SNK's *Samurai Spirits 2* is sure to score with fighting game otaku, although **Edge**'s judgement is reserved over the firm's new title, *Shock Troopers Second Squad*. Capcom presented its new Mechbattle game *Tech Romancer*, while *Jo Jo*, a Manga-style fighting game was only viewable on video. Meanwhile, Namco was touting *Race On* and *Gunmen Wars* (similar in essence to Sega's *Virtual-On*, with the added bonus of players being able to capture their faces into the game), and revealed *Fighting Layer*, developed by ex-Capcom affiliate Arika and featuring two *Street Fighter EX* characters.

Elsewhere, Taito had a new cartridge-based arcade board called G Net on offer, with *Ray Crisis* (the sequel to *Ray Storm*) and *Chaos Heat* (a *Dynamite Deka*-style affair) both utilising the hardware. The lost-cost N64 coin-op system Aleck 64, featuring more RAM but similar graphics capabilities to the console, was displayed with *Star Soldiers* (a shoot 'em up), *Let's Smash* (tennis), and *Eleven Beat World Soccer* (football).

While Naomi and Sega were clearly the stars of JAMMA, if only for the sheer weight of titles on offer, the Dreamcast-derived system is not the high-performance unit some, including several AM division staff, had hoped for. The mantle currently held by Sega's costly Model 3 will be taken soon. It's just that NEC, VideoLogic and Sega refuse to say when.



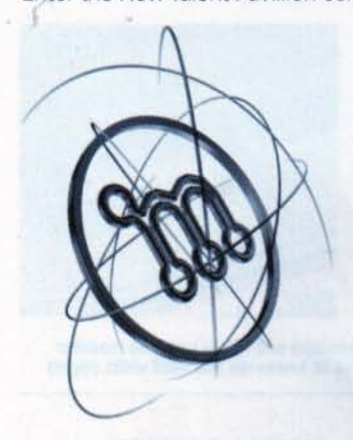




Konami's *Dance Dance Revolution* (above) is a sight to behold. Naomi game *House of the Dead 2* (top right) was received enthusiastically by the crowds. *Gunmen Wars* (right)

MILIA '99: CALLING ALL TALENT

Enter the New Talent Pavillion competition and win your dream job



Next February's Milia multimedia extravaganza in Cannes is to feature both a Milia Games area and a New Talent Pavillion.

Taking place at the Palais des Festivals between February 9 and 12, Milia '99 will feature the usual mind-numbing array of multimedia titles from a multitude of developers across Europe. Meanwhile, the organisers are looking for entries to this year's NTP competition by November 16. The addition of the Milia Games section could generate stronger ties with the games industry, particularly as recent comments at ECTS suggested that some publishers were considering giving the '99 show a miss. While no exhibitors have yet been confirmed, Milia '98 attracted Sony, Gremlin and Infogrames among others.

Milia's New Talent Pavillion has led to employment for several past winners, with companies such as IBM and Fujitsu taking successful applicants under their wings. While previous NTP competitions have been open exclusively to students, organiser Reed Midem has decided to cast the net wider for Milia '99. Now freelance and amateur designers, programmers, authors, scriptwriters and musicians with suitable projects can take part, with the organisers' avowed intent to secure work for the winners.

The victors will be selected from relevant multimedia and interactive work in a variety of categories, including games, education, children's, experimental and Internet technologies on any viable platform.

Judging will take place in Paris this December, with the winners announced at the show in Cannes.

Those interested in applying should visit the official Milia '99 Website at www.milia.com, to download the relevant entry forms.



This year's Milia event saw a growth in interest from videogame publishers, and next year's, in February, promises even greater support

DOORS OF PERCEPTION 5

The Netherlands Design Institute opens its doors to game designers

The final programme for the fifth instalment of the Netherlands Design Institute's successful Doors of Perception conference series has been announced.

Doors 5: PLAY concentrates on multimedia, the Internet, design and culture, and gathers 800 participants including leading designers, game developers, philosophers, authors, teachers, publishers, architects and journalists from all over the globe to discuss all aspects relating to the future of play.

Confirmed speakers include, among others, Alan Kay (personal computing pioneer currently vice president of Walt Disney's R&D department), *Joystick Nation* author JC Herz, Maxis founder and designer of *Sim City* Will Wright, and Japanese media artist Toshio Iwai, who will be showing the latest version of his *Music Insects* for the Super Famicom. Furthermore, Argonaut director Jez San is expected to attend the seminar on gameplay which hopes to define the engaging nature of videogames and the possibility of incorporating those elements into education.

The conference is being held at the Beurs van Gerlage building in Amsterdam on November 26-28. Further information can be obtained by visiting www.doorsof perception.com on the Net.



Edge hopes the organisers don't actually condone drowning babies

Net Yaroze slashed

Sony has reduced the cost of its Net Yaroze system from £350 to £230 in a bid to attract new users to the hardware.

Computer science students and younger programmers are being targetted by the new initiative, which represents an incredible saving of £320 on the unit's original RRP.

Net Yaroze systems are now in use at 22 schools and colleges in the UK, and several Yaroze 'graduates' have now found jobs within the industry. Visit the updated Yaroze site at www.scee.sony.co.uk/yarinfo for more details.

Correction: On page 144 of last month's issue **Edge** stated that the MPMAN Internet Audio Player is available from World Com, when it should in fact be GBS Ltd. Call 07050 607078.

3DFX: THE NEXT GENERATION ADVANCES

Voodoo chipset on the Rampage

Further details regarding what can be expected from the next-generation Voodoo chipset have been revealed. Speaking exclusively to **Edge** at ECTS, **Tony Tamasi**, graphics hardware product manager for 3Dfx, said, "We have a number of new innovations that we're planning for next year. Just like Voodoo and Voodoo 2, we've been listening to the game developers and they tell us they want this kind of performance, they want these kind of new features. You can expect to see a new generation of hardware which solves a lot of the pain points for developers."

While Tamasi wouldn't be drawn on Voodoo 3's exact specification, the developers' wish list gives a good indication of what to expect. Features should include per-pixel effects, antialiasing, particle-system acceleration, high-order surfaces, sort-independent transparency and improved lighting effects.

"We're going to attack a very significant percentage of those," he insisted. High-order surface support could essentially mean that hardware tessellation is destined for Voodoo 3.

The recently announced version *3.0* of *Glide* carries features designed to support the next chipset. "It kind of lays the groundwork, at least architecturally, for some of the things we're going to be doing in our next generation hardware," claimed Tamasi. He added that most of the alterations made to *Glide* won't be appreciated by gamers, but by developers instead. "It's cleaned up a lot of the baggage we've been carrying, things that we always meant to go back and fix," he explained. It should be easier to create a high-performance 3D title with *Glide 3.0* than with version *2.0*, as it now supports strips and fans. These are ways of sharing vertices between clusters of triangles, either in a continuous strip or a fan formation, therefore reducing the amount of data required to draw them. However, titles created using *Glide 3.0* will not operate on earlier versions of the software, although it supports all 3Dfx hardware.

Meanwhile, 3Dfx was busy evangelising its recent Banshee combined 2D/3D card (see news, **E**61) at ECTS. While refusing to comment on specifics, PR director Steve Schick claimed that a number of OEM deals (where the card is bundled with pre-built PCs) were imminent for Banshee. The lack of a 2D capability has previously made Voodoo an unattractive option for PC manufacturers; the new combined chipset addresses this directly. In addition, Tamasi hopes that developers will put Banshee to work with authoring tools such as *3D Studio Max*, and also sees potential for Internet-related applications such as VRML.



Currently codenamed Rampage, the third generation of the 3Dfx Voodoo chipset is expected to offer per-pixel effects and greatly improved lighting

FINAL FAREWELL: 64DD

Nintendo's Howard Lincoln confirms recent speculation

Nintendo of America president **Howard Lincoln** has sounded the death knell for the 64DD – in the west at least. Speaking to **Edge** this issue, Lincoln states that, "We don't have any plans to release the 64DD either in Europe or the United States." However, he goes on to add, "I would anticipate that in Japan… it may well be launched. But it will not be launched before June of next year."

Lincoln claims that the reason for the 64DD's no-show in Europe and the US is entirely software related. "We simply haven't satisfied ourselves that we've found a product, or a series of products that reach the quality level that would make it a good idea to launch the DD." However, more likely explanations could be found in the N64's shaky installed base (particularly in Europe), the historical failure of such console add-ons, and the falling price of cartridge manufacture (which few could have predicted as being so dramatic). NoA's president admits that this last point has influenced the cancellation of the 64DD, but denies a lack of installed N64s to be to blame. Whether the technology will resurface as part of Nintendo's next home system (currently dubbed 'N2000') is another matter altogether…



Great design; natty concept; no chance of a western release

N64 carts cut

Thanks in part to falling semi-conductor prices, Nintendo has cut the cost of Nintendo 64 cartridges in Europe and the UK. While this will come as no consolation to those Siemens and Fujitsu workers in the North East who are facing redundancy, UK gamers can now expect the majority of new releases to retail at £40. Older titles have also been reduced to either £30 or £40, while Nintendo's joypads are now £20.

Among those affected will be the forthcoming PAL releases of *1080° Snowboarding*, *F-Zero X*, *Turok 2* and *ISS '98*. Strangely enough, the massively anticipated *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* sticks at the £50 mark…

PRESCREEN

EDGE PREMIERES INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT'S WAVE-MAKING UPSTARTS

It's all Doom's fault

Check your weapons at the door, please. Firstperson gardeners only...

Take a step back and look at the firstperson genre. This is a genre that – arguably – has the potential to offer the most involving of game experiences. After all, it's as near to virtual reality as can currently be expected. The latest generation of 3D cards, coupled with AMD and Intel's new processors, are delivering polygon counts in the millions, offering developers the potential to create more or less any environment imaginable. But this just isn't happening.

The problem is the first artifact you see. In those virtual hands is a weapon. Be it a laser rifle, grenade launcher, razor-edged blade or any number of destructive devices, the player has to destroy. (Even when unarmed, hands serve only one real purpose: hitting enemies.) And around this simple premise the game is built, sucked into a narrow channel of limited development.

Edge isn't advocating a glut of firstperson gardening titles, but most gamers would be able to generate at least one new idea themselves.

How about a prison escape game, *à la* 'The Shawshank Redemption', or a burglary simulator – or its inverse realised in a detective game format? And ageing PlayStation platformer *Jumping Flash* proved that a firstperson *Super Mario 64* isn't entirely beyond comprehension.

Meanwhile, developers keep piling on the pyrotechnics, wandering aimlessly down the path marked out by id's seminal *Doom*. But while id can justifiably update its own products (although it's starting to look dangerously like a one-game studio), surely someone, somewhere can think of something new to experiment with.

Or perhaps the blame lies not with developers but with the publishers paying their wages...








Clockwise from top left: *Doom* inheritor *Quake II* and followers *Kanaan, Daikatana, SiN, Unreal* and *Shogo* – fine titles, but why is outrageous weaponry such a key element of firstperson games?

Edge's most wanted

Bright blips on the videogame radar






Jet Force Gemini	Galleon	Shadowman	Soul Reaver
(N64) Rare	(PC) Conf. Factor	(N64) Iguana UK	(PS) Crystal Dynamics
JFG's substantial video footage at ECTS only served to justify **Edge**'s excitement after seeing the game's excruciatingly brief E3 appearance.	With a number of glorious set-pieces, Confounding Factor's debut title could be the action adventure to die for. Still a long way off, but hugely promising.	Thirdperson platforming. Except it's not that simple, with serial killers, dimension shifting, vast environments, voodoo, and (lots) of blood.	One of the PlayStation highlights of ECTS, *Soul Reaver*'s novel gameplay and vampiric roots do much to recommend it. Has Eidos bought a star?

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PRESCREEN ALPHAS

EDGE SHOWCASES THE SHINING STARS OF ECTS

GALLEON

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **CONFOUNDING FACTOR**











Shown only to a select few invited to the Interplay stand at ECTS, *Galleon* has advanced a long way since **Edge** debuted the game back in **E**61. Confounding Factor is striving to pack its creation with dozens of specific animations, for everything from opening doors to pulling levers. The aim is to reward the player with multiple 'events', creating a rich atmosphere that draws you in. Also of major interest are the new facial animations, created by 200 polygon models and capable of expressing a wide range of emotions.

PERFECT DARK

FORMAT: **NINTENDO 64** DEVELOPER: **RARE**








Appearing at ECTS in video-only form (if you could find your way past the world's most awkward booth curtain), the footage featured snippets that didn't make the original tape shown at E3. Needless to say, there was very little in terms of surprises, with Rare understandably not keen to give too much away, too soon. Nevertheless, the videogaming world is left with these static yet highly impressive new screenshots as relative compensation.

JET FORCE GEMINI

FORMAT: **NINTENDO 64** DEVELOPER: **RARE**






Like *Perfect Dark*, Rare's other highly anticipated title was shown as part of a looping sequence in a corner of Nintendo's ECTS stand. Yet unlike the golden team's offering, all of the significant footage was entirely new, and very impressive it was too. Given its current state, **Edge** expects an early 1999 release.

BODY HARVEST

Narrowly missing review this issue, DMA Design's *Body Harvest* is looking as if it could really be something special. In the battle to repel the alien invaders – and thereby saving the human race from being eaten – you must time travel through five locations. On hand is a vast vehicle pool that contains everything from motorbikes to jump-jets. Nintendo-influenced RPG elements ice the cake.



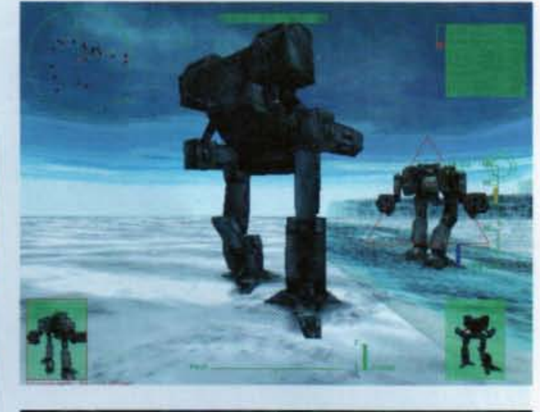


MECHWARRIOR 3

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **MICROPROSE**

MicroProse's Battletech series has proved immensely popular in all its various incarnations. Now with challenger *Heavy Gear II* on the battle horizon, *MechWarrior 3* has stomped from the warehouse and is lining its sight. This time you can view the action in thirdperson, giving the opportunity to witness some seriously hefty hardware in action.











LANDER

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **PSYGNOSIS**







Drawing its inspiration from classics such as *Gravitar* and *Thrust*, Psygnosis' inertia fest currently looks promising. As the company's first DVD venture (fear not, a normal CD-ROM version is also promised), *Lander* includes an impressive Dolby Digital soundtrack which should have players thoroughly immersed in the action come February next year.

ROLLCAGE

FORMAT: **PC/PLAYSTATION** DEVELOPER: **ATD**







Forget realism, *Rollcage* is all about fast, frantic, futuristic weapon-based racing. As a result of their design, the vehicles can flip over and carry on regardless, and given enough speed, their aerodynamics allow them to drive along walls or even on tunnel ceilings. The PC version shown at ECTS impressed and the game is currently pencilled in for a spring release.

DAIKATANA

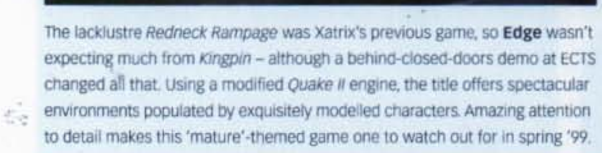
Cynical factions within the videogame industry seem to be almost willing John Romero's original post-id game to fail. While *Daikatana* seems unlikely to set a new paradigm, **Edge** sees no reason to believe that Ion Storm is cooking the biggest turkey this side of Christmas. As promised, the game features novel environments and a diverse set of levels, along with some interesting weapon selections.




KINGPIN

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **XATRIX ENTERTAINMENT**



The lacklustre *Redneck Rampage* was Xatrix's previous game, so **Edge** wasn't expecting much from *Kingpin* – although a behind-closed-doors demo at ECTS changed all that. Using a modified *Quake II* engine, the title offers spectacular environments populated by exquisitely modelled characters. Amazing attention to detail makes this 'mature'-themed game one to watch out for in spring '99.

A BUG'S LIFE

Based on the forthcoming CGI movie from 'Toy Story' creator Pixar (centring around events experienced from an insect's perspective), this action adventure title is Disney's second venture onto the PlayStation scene, after the reasonably competent *Hercules*. As Flik, the disaster-prone ant, you must negotiate 15 levels defeating enemies and solving problems. Rich graphics are obviously fundamental.





DUKE NUKEM: ZERO HOUR

FORMAT: **NINTENDO 64** DEVELOPER: **EUROCOM**







While the Duke has just made a reasonably successful appearance on PlayStation (see p88), his part-complete N64 venture seems to have the visual edge, if nothing else. Graphics are detailed and move far more smoothly than on Sony's machine, although the central time-travel premise of *Time to Kill* is carried over to the Nintendo. Expected early '99.

ANACHRONOX

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **ION STORM**







Ion Storm looks intent on growing the PC's stature further as the format of choice for RPG nuts with *Anachronox*, a 3D, thirdperson-viewed, science fiction-based roleplaying adventure. Controlling three characters, you must explore your way through an elaborate and intriguingly dynamic plot. A custom *Quake II* engine is the muscle behind the diverse environments.

TANKTICS

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **DMA**

A brief tinker with DMA's simply-interfaced strategy game (played almost entirely with the two mouse buttons alone) at ECTS turned into a prolonged stint – if only to see how bizarre things were going to get. By gathering rocks, boulders, sheep and other items, and dropping them into your recycler, tank parts are created. These can be stacked together and sent to war. Okay?







HOSTILE WATERS

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **RAGE**

With the potential to be a *Carrier Command* for the '90s, *Hostile Waters* is blessed with Rage's knowledge of what makes PCs tick. Special effects such as gusts of wind from helicopter blades and the alien bases (right), which grow from a central point like some bastard root crop, already look promising. As with *Incoming*, several different craft can be controlled, although the emphasis is more towards strategically planning the movement of forces before attacking.









This living creature is totally unique.
He inherited genes from his parents.
He will learn to talk. Feel pain. Be excited.
Suffer illness. Grow to adulthood.
Perhaps fall in love and have babies.
But for now he needs constant love and attention.

SHOGUN

Looking technically impressive, Creative Assembly's PC war epic hopes to take the *C&C* genre an evolutionary step forward. Set in feudal Japan, you control thousands of soldiers around impressive 3D landscapes with the aim of becoming the Shogun (ruler of the land). The AI routines have allegedly been extracted from ancient Chinese literature on the art of war.





SEGA RALLY 2

FORMAT: **DREAMCAST** DEVELOPER: **SEGA**

Expected to feature at Dreamcast's launch, all eyes will be on Sega's conversion of its Model 3-powered arcade rally experience (these shots are supposedly from the PC version). It could prove decisively what Sega development staff have been maintaining all along – that if competently programmed, the new console is capable of matching arcade products.











PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **RED ORB**







Although parent company Broderbund is in the process of making severe staff cuts throughout its organisation, including many within its Red Orb games subsidiary, it's thought that *Prince of Persia 3D* will survive. Given the huge amount of positive press the title has received, any other decision would seem foolish. These shots reveal a less garish look compared to the game's previous appearance in **E**58. Swordplay remains the focus, though.

HIRED GUNS 2

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **DEVIL'S THUMB**

One of DMA's lesser known creations, *Hired Guns* was an Amiga title which boasted revolutionary, simultaneous four character control. In addition, two mice could be connected so that twoplayers could command the action. Now Devil's Thumb, a US development group splintered from DMA, is updating *Hired Guns'* seminal action for Psygnosis on the PC.







BRAVEHEART

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **RED LEMON**

Previously known as *Tartan Army*, Red Lemon's claimed 'strategic combat/god game' is now in the process of adaptation to the *Braveheart* movie licence, thanks to the intervention of publisher Eidos. The title pitches you in battle as the commander of a warring Scottish clan, while strategic alliances must be forged in order to build a power base. Originally due for a first-quarter release in 1999, incorporating the *Braveheart* elements may change that.







BLUE STINGER

Resident Evil and James Cameron's 'Aliens' provide the starting point for this, a Climax Graphics-developed island adventure; another potentially impressive Dreamcast debut title



Character animation is smooth and varied – on both the lead character and the broad menagerie of monsters currently inhabiting the game's island setting

The scenery is particularly impressive, with evocative use of location-specific lighting and a fine eye for minute background detail

Format: **Dreamcast**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Climax Graphics**
Release: **Winter**
Origin: **Japan**

Everyone knows that for Dreamcast to be a serious competitor to the PlayStation, it will have to be supported by several triple-A launch titles. The technology alone will only sell it to the hardcore gaming fraternity; the massmarket will want to see more visual proof.

Just two months before the machine's Japanese launch, this fact seems to have struck home to Sega. Having recently announced the hugely promising *Sonic Adventure* (see p36), the company has now introduced Climax Graphics' *Blue Stinger* – an arcade adventure set on a mysterious island which appears off the coast of Mexico after an earthquake in the year 2000. When a biological research team is sent out to investigate, the government never reports the group's findings; that the isle is unfortunately overrun by monsters. Instead, the corrupt ruling body allows hundreds of people to move there.

Seventeen years later, when contact with the island is lost, the government belatedly calls in the 'E-Special Sea Rescue' team (ESER), a crack recovery unit headed up by Elliot G Ballade. Predictably, you take on the role of Ballade and your job is to explore the island's 230 locations, doing battle with the hideous monsters that now almost exclusively inhabit the landscape.

Although the plot may sound crushingly familiar (*Resident Evil* meets 'Aliens'), the visuals are indeed something to behold. The quality of the character animation is unmistakable; humans and monsters alike boast incredibly smooth, detailed styling, and yet – through the wonders of motion capture – they move with the fluidity of animated movie characters.

Added to this is the sheer physical versatility of the lead protagonist – accentuated and fine-tuned by support of the analogue controller.











The lead character is followed through the game by a translucent entity (above left, top right), which, broadly speaking, assumes the role of a guardian angel

The player can call on a number of weapons including a bulky rocket launcher (main), and a 'Star Wars'-inspired lightsabre (above right)

Ballade can swim, run, use a variety of vehicles and fight – all while maintaining a sleek, polished body shape. He can also employ an impressive range of weapons, including a lightsabre, futuristic blaster and huge missile launcher. And, in what may be a first, in cold environments it's possible to see his breath appearing as condensation. Not only that, but the speed of his respiration alters according to how fast he's moving. *Virtua Fighter 3*, eat your beating heart out.

Background graphics are also suitably adept. The town where most of the action takes place boasts a huge variety of locations including clubs, bars, game centres and toilets – all of which can be visited by the player. The quality and level of detail evident here is astonishing: graffiti plasters the toilet walls, bottles of drink sit behind the bar, etc. More impressive, though, is the fact that there is no clumsy polygonal glitching or scenic pop-up as the player wanders through the town, lending a level of realism which adds to the dark atmosphere surrounding the action. Atmosphere is also aided by a series of accomplished prerendered sequences, levered in to flesh out the plot.

Peripheral visual detail is rich throughout the game, with reflective effects proving especially popular with the art team. Missile burners reflect off targets before they impact, explosions reflect across environments in a hypnotic array of colours, the lead character's shadow alters depending on his position on the screen and the level and source of the lighting, and realistic neon light reflects across his face as he passes by. In fact, many effects that PC designers have been groping towards over the last four years are on display here in impressively complete form. At the moment, the demo version (running on a Set 5 development board) is only moving at 15 frames per second, but the finished game, which is set to run at 60fps, should look amazing.

Indeed, all that's missing is the gameplay. **Edge** tried out a brief demo where the Ballade character fought a crab-like monster. Not much of an introduction to a game which promises up to 15 hours of total gameplay (for players who know what they're doing). If the plotting and interaction can match the level of detail on show everywhere else, *Sonic Adventure* may have a rival on its hands for the position of 'key Dreamcast launch title'.







Taking a leaf out of *Resident Evil*'s book, there is plenty of graphic gore and explosions. Edge has seen few puzzle elements, though

R4 – RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

After releasing some of the most technically advanced racing games for the PlayStation, for the first time in four years Namco finds itself with some catching up to do...



Drastic elevation changes have always featured in the *Racer* series and have never failed to impress. By comparison, other games may appear a little flat





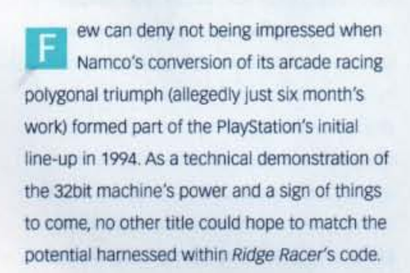
Edge wonders how easily Namco will adapt to a more elaborate physics model







Unlike previous titles in the series, *R4* features a healthier number of tracks. If reversed and modified in traditional *Racer* style, the game's eight circuits should prove enough diversity



Few can deny not being impressed when Namco's conversion of its arcade racing polygonal triumph (allegedly just six month's work) formed part of the PlayStation's initial line-up in 1994. As a technical demonstration of the 32bit machine's power and a sign of things to come, no other title could hope to match the potential harnessed within *Ridge Racer*'s code.

Although less revolutionary, its two PlayStation sequels have nevertheless been well received by players wishing to indulge in arcade-derived, car-related thrills. While *RR Revolution* took the brightly coloured nature of the original to a new extreme, the third PS instalment, *Rage Racer*, adopted a more sombre approach as well as introducing upgradability to the series. While the latter kept a lot of PS arcade racing fans happy, those wishing for something more technical were left empty-handed. Codemasters' *TOCA Touring Car Championship* eventually arrived, closely followed by the inspired *Gran Turismo*, and the PS racing scene would never be the same again.

Predictably, a number of *GT*-aspiring titles have since emerged from developers worldwide, but few are unlikely to cause as much commotion among gamers as a fourth instalment from Namco's racing range for Sony's machine. Four years after its original PlayStation venture, the Japanese developer is going bumper to bumper with the 32bit console's reigning champions.



News of *Ridge Racer Type 4* first emerged on Namco's Website along with just four screenshots, one of which is shown here

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **December**
Origin: **Japan**









R4's draw distance, combined with detailed trackside scenery, serves as further evidence of Namco's market-leading PlayStation technical expertise

As such, *R4 – Ridge Racer Type 4* is by far the most realistic looking of the series with an extensive colour palette and elaborate lighting and shading effects. The latter are particularly effective and result from Namco's clever positioning of the sun in order to achieve the most dramatic results. Another technically impressive aspect, given the quality of the visuals and amount of trackside detail, is the game's current draw distance, adding to the settings' authenticity.

If further evidence of Namco's determination is needed, then the game's 300-odd vehicles with selectable paintwork should prove conclusive. Furthermore, in an unusual move away from the essence of the *Ridge Racer* series, the game features a Grand Prix story mode. As an independent driver, you must drive a variety of vehicles in a succession of different races with the obvious goal of finishing as high up the grid as possible. Naturally, factors such as the selection of team and car type affect the proceedings. *R4*'s eight circuits may seem limited by today's standards, but they do represent a vast improvement on *Rage Racer*'s previous four offerings.

A vast number of cars, the possibility of reversible and modifiable tracks, impressive graphics, and an overall realistic racing environment could place *R4* very near the front axle of the current PlayStation racing elite. Expect the team to spend the last two months busily tweaking the title's gameplay, which looks unlikely to shed its traditional coin-op roots. Namco's promised more *R4* announcements, so look out for next month's issue...



The Grand Prix mode requires you to pick several of the teams and cars available as a freelance driver before entering a succession of races









In true *Ridge Racer* fashion, *R4*'s vehicles are an attractive amalgamation of real-life models with mostly extravagant and colourful racing liveries





***R4* represents a major departure for Namco, boasting a far more realistic setting than any of the company's previous PS racing titles. *GT* may need a new lick of paint...**

CARMAGEDDON II: CARPOCALYPSE NOW

Controversial as ever, yet loaded with fresh features, PC gaming's ultimate bad boy is back, darker then ever and boasting an updated physics engine







Track designs are as vast as ever, with countless secrets to discover, multiple routes, and a wealth of collectable bonus items



It looks like *Carmageddon*, it plays like *Carmageddon*, but somehow it hangs together more solidly than it did last time around. And the zombies are in 3D

This electrifying add-on usefully piles on the points, zapping zombies on all sides

Format: **PC/PS/N64**

Publisher: **SCi**

Develpper: **Stainless**

Release: **November**

Origin: **UK**

Sequelitis is a deadly scourge attacking the very bedrock of the games industry. But there's no need to worry about *Carpocalypse Now's* developer Stainless Software catching the deadly virus. The destruction derby it organised in an Isle of Wight field by way of introduction to *Carmageddon II*, which left 30 cars smashed beyond recognition, demonstrated how *Carmageddon's* theme is an obsession. Thankfully, no pedestrians turned up.

Carpocalypse Now is quite clearly more than a tart-up and re-hash job. For starters, everything is a 3D model, including the pedestrians and extraneous objects such as boulders and street lamps. Accordingly, it looks fantastic – which could hardly be said about the original.

The original version's biggest strength – its physics engine – has been improved so that it takes in all the newly three-dimensional objects, and has been mated with realistically constructed cars, which can suffer damage to individual parts or even – in extreme situations – be sliced in half. You can see yourself driving them, and there's loads of glass around in the game to smash.

But while these changes may be the sort of thing you'd expect to find in an incremental update of a game, they combine with the sheer depravity of Stainless Software's collective mind to create something that's an entirely different – and even more fun – beast than *Carmageddon*. The 30 tracks (which include some tighter multiplayer efforts that can accommodate up to eight participants, to encourage more full-on automotive destruction, plus ten mission-based tracks) have been matched with more diverse objectives than before, and are simply fantastic. For example, one is set on an aircraft carrier, in which you have to find the ship's captain and run him over in order to get to the top missile silo











SCi's promotional junket for *Carmageddon II* involved several real cars being totalled in the name of videogaming, setting the scene well for the game proper

The revamped 3D engine has been used to great effect here, with detailed locations and high polygon counts used for all the vehicles

and blow everything up. The zoo stage will feature a menagerie of lovingly modelled animals to be crushed, and there's a fairground track based on the seminal *Stunt Car Racer*.

The power-ups, too, are funnier than ever, including a huge ball and chain that attaches to the back of your car, which is so heavy that it can drag you off track (although if you wield it correctly, a citation for 'Outstanding Achievement' will come your way). The poor pedestrians can be turned into stick-men, people with huge heads, suicidal cannon-fodder and even drunks, and you can attack them with napalm, hugely powerful springs and the self-explanatory Electro-Bastard Ray. Naturally, if you napalm them, they'll run around burning for a while before dying, or if you tip them into water, they'll thrash around before eventually drowning.

Bizarrely, all this new technology is somewhat the focus of *Carmageddon II*. You'll find yourself driving around in sight-seeing mode, drinking in the havoc you cause. Thanks to an action-replay system that's second to none – you can easily use it to record segments as *QuickTime* movies – any carnage you cause won't be lost to posterity. And when you start finding the power-ups which interfere with your car's physics – such as Pinball Mode (which makes it bounce around like a kangaroo) or Jelly Suspension — you'll be able to generate some of the biggest and funniest wipe-outs of all time.

SCi will publish two versions of the game – one 15-rated with green-blooded zombies as peds, and one full-on, which it is adamant will get an 18 certificate before launch. Stainless has made Direct3D, Glide and software versions, although it makes little sense to play it without a 3D graphics card. It won't, alas, ship with an editor, but Stainless is talking to amateur thirdparties about creating one (which, *Quake*-style, would enable you to put your own faces on figures) and claims the game is "Much more editable" than the original. So keep a close eye on the vast number of fanatical *Carmageddon* Websites that litter the Internet.

Carpocalypse Now is the game **Edge** hoped that the first one would be. Never before has a game revelled so much in gleefully destructive behaviour, nor provided so many toys with which to create such hilarious virtual destruction and carnage. It's a glimpse of a completely insane and darkly comic world. And what more could you ask for from a game?







From the ultraviolence of the standard game to *CII*'s new mission-based levels (including one on an aircraft carrier), Stainless' sequel has a lot more to offer

OMIKRON

Head honcho at Quantic Dreams, David Cage spent over a year writing the plot for *Omikron*. With the game reaching an advanced state of development, Edge revisits his future-city dream







Initial player Kay'l is a police officer without a mission, and indeed a memory. His only link to reality is a wristwatch which draws into play his slider car to transport him through the various cityscapes

Constructed around the ambitious concept of creating a living, breathing 3D city, replete with multiple inhabitants and locations, *Omikron* has come a long way since **Edge** witnessed its progress last July. After being treated to a demonstration by Eidos producer Herve Albertazzi – which revealed the free-roaming potential of *Omikron* – time was found amid the frenzy of ECTS to interview **David Cage**, head of the game's French developer Quantic Dreams.

Starting the game in the body of initial protagonist Kay'l, you follow a cinematic plotline through the city of Omikron that Cage claims, "I worked on for over a year, because I wanted to create something that is more like a movie than a videogame." Banish thoughts of interactive movies and FMV, as Cage wanted *Omikron* to be "something completely interactive, but with a movie feeling."

Play commences with the player occupying the body of Kay'l, an officer of the law, confused and unsure of where you are ('Total Recall'-style), equipped only with a hi-tech wristwatch that enables you to summon his slider car that's used to traverse the city. Through visiting locations, collecting items, witnessing events and talking to people, *Omikron*'s story unfolds. However, Cage has built a twist into the game, something he calls 'virtual reincarnation'. He explains: "When your body dies, your soul is reincarnated into the body of the first person who touches you. You can return as different people with different skills." This element immediately opens up new gameplay areas, with the various 'possessed' characters interacting with others.

The 'virtual reincarnation' plot structure is why *Omikron* is played in the thirdperson. Cage is quick to add, "I don't like firstperson views because I get sick! So Quantic Dreams will never do a firstperson game because I cannot play them." **Edge** isn't totally sold on the hand-to-hand combat sections of the game, wherein the camera swings around to the side, as in any traditional fighting title. "It's only in profile that you can really fight," Cage retorts, "our reference for the fighting part in *Tekken* – I think it's the best fighting game ever made." And with such lofty reference points in mind, Cage, Albertazzi and Quantic Dreams have until next summer to fashion *Omikron* into the success it certainly deserves to be.

Format: **PC/ PlayStation**
Publisher: **Eidos**
Developer: **Quantic Dreams**
Release: **Summer '99**
Origin: **France**







The unusual 'virtual reincarnation' allows you to metamorphose into other characters' bodies and use their skills – after you've been killed, that is...

POWERSLIDE

Ex-trail biker and Ratbag business manager Greg Siegele waxes lyrical on the latest *Powerslide*, now fully pumped up with a new 3D engine. Has the post-apocalyptic road game come of age?





Hidden around the tracks are various secret codes to unlock extra play modes

Since its showstopping debut at last year's E3 show, *Powerslide* has undergone a substantial overhaul. While the one-time 3Dfx demo now has a new D3D and Glide compatible engine, developer Emergent has undergone a name change to Ratbag (for copyright reasons). With the title's slipped-to-November release date drawing close, **Edge** met with Ratbag's business manager **Greg Siegele** to find what the final version of *Powerslide* will have to offer.

The game's new 3D engine is easily its most striking enhancement, offering a new freedom of expression to Ratbag's track designers. "The original game was something that took place in a halfpipe," explains Siegele, "and the cars were cylinders that had points pushed and pulled. We were limited in the way we could build the terrains and the cars." With vast landscapes and 12 detailed cars on track, that's all changed now, although Siegele's claim of 800 polygons per car simply doesn't add up (at 60fps that comes to nearly 600,000 polygons per second).



***Powerslide* lives up to its moniker, with extensive drifts and all the rough-riding action you'd expect**

Game structure has proved something of an errant trait among other games that began life as 3D card demos, with *Powerslide* contemporary *Ultim@te Race Pro* a notable offender. Siegele claims that the game's development team has been aware of that. "The way we've addressed it is to have a championship structure, a bit like Formula One – or even *Stunt Car Racer* which is a favourite game of ours," he says. As the game progresses, players will be awarded with the usual mélange of extra tracks and cars. In addition there are a number of cheat codes hidden in some of the sprawling circuits' most sprawled extents, which will unlock bonuses such as glider modes.

Powerslide has also gained a plot, of sorts, which goes some way towards setting up a basis for a race competition. Essentially, the game has two teams of 16 characters, the Ferals and the Corporates, set against a backdrop of post-ozone calamity nonsense. The scene is decidedly 'Mad Max', although Seigele claims that, "We never really thought of creating a 'Mad Max'-style game. It's a great film – I don't mind the comparison at all!" Ratbag's game seems more likely to live up to its name than anything else, though, with tail-happy cars and wild courses. Seigele's fond memories of trail-biking days are set for a digital resurrection.





Both hardware and software versions are available, though the former is preferable

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **GT Interactive**
Developer: **Ratbag**
Release: **November**
Origin: **Australia**



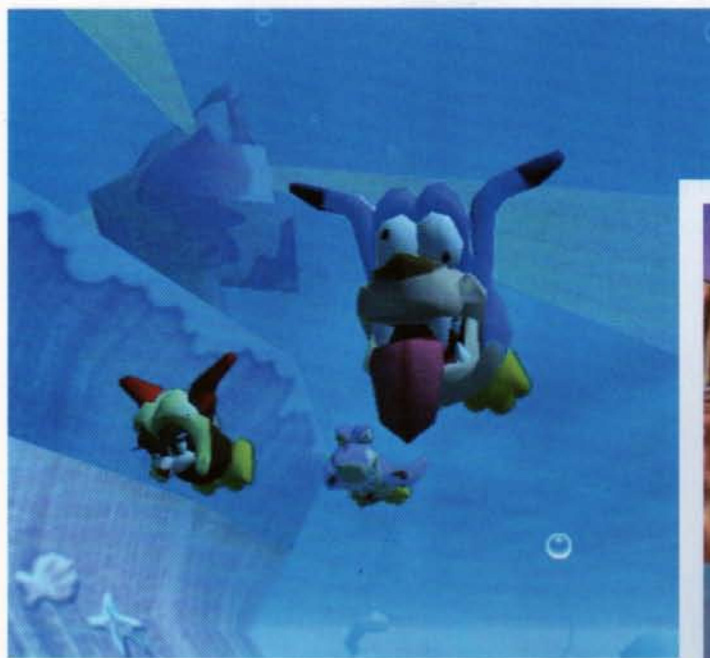


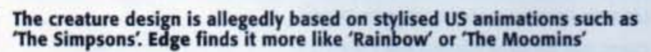


Track layouts are vast, ranging from dams to deserts and most things in between

PEN PEN TRiICELON

While most racing game developers back themselves into a realism cul-de-sac, General Entertainment supplants cars with cutesy penguin-shaped creatures in a surreal cartoon romp





The creature design is allegedly based on stylised US animations such as 'The Simpsons'. Edge finds it more like 'Rainbow' or 'The Moomins'





Players have to race underwater as well as on land. 'Jaws' (above) is a shark Pen Pen. There's also an octopus named Sneak. Don't ask...

Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Sega**

Developer: **General Ent.**

Release: **November (Japan)**

Origin: **Japan**

For a small company, General Entertainment has its corporate fingers stuffed in an impressive array of pies. There is the movie production arm – responsible for the likes of 'Zeiram 2' and the 'Master of Shiatsu' (monster movies that are unknown in the west, but no doubt big in Japan). Then there is the videogame department, which has worked on several PC, PlayStation and Saturn titles, and has recently expanded to take in a new development studio named Land Ho!, made up of ex-Sega staff. Here you'll find Kondoh Tomohiro, producer of *Panzer Dragoon 1* and *2*, Nakamura Atsuhiko, director on Saturn *Sega Rally Championship* and *Daytona USA CE*, and various other console luminaries who have worked on such titles as *J-League Pro Soccer Club* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*. A heavyweight line up indeed.

Land Ho!'s first game is *Pen Pen Triicelon*, a strange, innovative racing title which takes the open-ended environment of *OutRun* and populates it with – well, nothing you've ever seen the like of before. The vehicles here are in fact creatures named Pen Pen – weird penguin-esque hybrids, each (as you'd expect in a racing game) with his or her own style of movement. There are, therefore, small Pen Pen which are fast and good at cornering, and larger ones which are more resilient but slower and less agile.

But, somehow, it's more complicated than that. Each race is divided into three parts: swimming, running and sliding. The player has to compete in all three, yet each of the Pen Pen has strengths in different events – it's up to you to pick the creatures which best suit your own style of play. Whatever, all of the unlikely animals act and move in an endearingly comical manner. Along the way, the team has also thrown in a few CGI movies which separate the three events and give the competitors a few seconds to rest.

All of this might give you the impression that *Pen Pen Triicelon* is the work of the criminally insane – however, Land Ho! wanted it to be an 'original' title and developer Atsuhiko is no industry lightweight. So, hotfooted mutant penguins it is, then.





The characters are highly detailed, and each one boasts a distinct facial expression

R-TYPE DELTA

An old **Edge** favourite is about to make a comeback, newly furnished with an obligatory polygon engine, which almost matches the crisp detail of its precursors' sprites. Well, almost...



Taking full advantage of its new polygonal world, Irem has created a series of fantastical foes for *Delta*, although the heritage is maintained





Special effects really impress, while the gameplay is noticeably tighter than recent shoot 'em ups, with enemy fire less scattershot and classic attack waves





Choose from either the traditional R-9, the electrical R-13 or the all-new R-x (shown above, and as yet not available for play)

Following **E**57's cover featuring Irem's *R-Types* compilation (soon to be released on PAL in the UK), the imminent added-dimension update to the series *R-Type Delta* was a clear candidate for **Edge**'s attention. Following down the path blasted clear by *Einhänder*, *G-Darius* and *Radiant Silvergun* (although in development since before any of those titles arrived), *Delta* is a polygonised interpretation of the original games, fleshed out by several new aspects.

Although the visuals lack the crisp definition of *R-Type*'s sprites, a similar level of precision is required on the behalf of the player to navigate with success. Among side-scrolling shoot 'em ups Irem's games have always stood supreme, and any follow-up will have the eagle eyes of devotees upon it. In addition to the arcade originals, over two million versions of the games have been sold for consoles ranging from the PC Engine to the PlayStation, which is host to this new iteration. Precise, complex and demanding gameplay is the mark of a true *R-Type* title, but with some polishing still to go, *Delta* may have what it takes.

Spread across seven lengthy stages, the game is littered with visual cues from its older incarnations. Attack waves and bullet patterns twang reminiscent chords, as do foes which leave solid trails behind them. However, the PlayStation's polygons haven't been forgotten, with huge enemies that dive in and out of the screen and large blocks that tumble towards you. *Delta*'s graphic style is less delicate than *Einhänder*'s, which is not to its detriment, although a higher resolution would have brought it nearer to its ancestor's looks. However, the action slides by at a smooth 60fps, a standard which will hopefully become the norm as the next generation of consoles draws in.

In order to bring variety to the gameplay, Irem has included three selectable 'R' ships – the classic R-9 and R-13 models, plus the new R-x. Each has its own pace and more importantly, its own version of the charge beam that is part of the series' creed. One of these is a powerful electric blast that can wrap back around the craft to catch passing enemies. *R-Type*, it seems, is set to strike again.

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Irem**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **November (Japan)**
Origin: **Japan**



The R-13 in use here is attached to its orb by a kind of virtual umbilical, and unleashes a furious lightning attack in place of the R-9's blast

C3 RACING

The PlayStation racing scene may be littered with a depressing number of also-rans, yet Eutechnyx is confident its new reality-based offering will leave the substandard crowd behind



As in *Total Drivin'*, the 3D engine is one of the game's strongest aspects, handling sections that stretch far into the distance with impressive ease









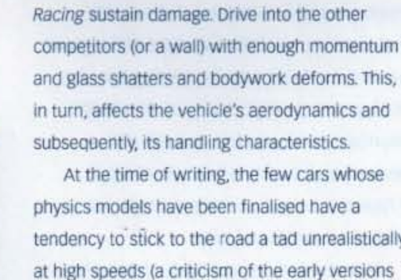




The car models are accurately modelled from their real-life counterparts. Touches such as dynamic mud (above) are pleasing

With realistic driving games finding favour with the general public, publishers are tripping over each other to create the next *Gran Turismo*. And while current opinion indicates this spot has been reserved for *GT 2*, the development community nevertheless carries on enthusiastically.

Enter *C3 Racing* (as in Car Constructors Championship). Based around contemporary production cars, the game features around 30 tracks (including reversed, weather and night effects) divided between England, Norway, Rome, Monaco, Africa, China, Indonesia, Peru, Brazil and the US. The circuits are tarmac and dirt track-based, but occasionally a refreshing mixture of the two is also offered. The cars themselves come from a variety of manufacturers, so expect to find a Subaru Impreza STi4 giving a Honda NSX, Mitsubishi 3000GT and Mazda RX-7 a run for their Yen, for example. Ford injects some US muscle into this otherwise Japanese-dominated field in the form of the new Cougar, a works-prepared Puma, and its favoured RS200 '80s rally car, while Marcos, Peugeot and Renault add a little European flair. Naturally, all are customisable, allowing you to tweak 32 handling-altering variables.



The lighting effects in Eutechnyx's latest racer apply 'real-world' rules of lighting

Surprisingly, given motor manufacturers' delicate nature when it comes to having their cars portrayed in videogames, vehicles in *C3 Racing* sustain damage. Drive into the other competitors (or a wall) with enough momentum and glass shatters and bodywork deforms. This, in turn, affects the vehicle's aerodynamics and subsequently, its handling characteristics.

At the time of writing, the few cars whose physics models have been finalised have a tendency to stick to the road a tad unrealistically at high speeds (a criticism of the early versions of *Total Drivin'*) and some of them feel a little heavy. However, these are aspects Eutechnyx is likely to be refining before the game's Christmas release.

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Infogrames**

Developer: **Eutechnyx**

Release: **Late '98**

Origin: **UK**

NBA JAM '99

Iguana West's update of its UK cousin's classic hoop-shooter may boast 500 'real' moves, but will the 3D '99 version match the 2D speed and agility of its predecessors?











'He jams it in! He's heating up! He's on fire!' the original *NBA Jam*'s samples must rate among videogaming's greatest moments. The sheer despair generated as your opponent went 'on fire', thus becoming near-invincible, is unforgettable







Visuals will be crisp and clear, running at 640x480 on the N64 through use of Acclaim Sports' ubiquitous 3D polygon engine

American sports games come and go, and while some such as SCEE's *Total NBA* are notable for their quality, none have matched the original *NBA Jam* for sheer popular notoriety. Iguana UK's slam-dunkin' basketball classic, featuring two-on-two matches and outrageous manoeuvres, captured the hearts of millions. Happy recollections of four-up matches on the SNES are surely buried in the memory of any hardened games player. And now Acclaim Sports contributor Iguana West (previously Sculptured Software) is honoured with the task of reviving *NBA Jam* for a '99 edition. But what's on offer?

Driven by Acclaim's curiously tagged 'Quagmire' 3D engine that has become the backbone of all its new Sports releases, *NBA Jam '99* features several new play modes to enrich the original's tag matches. Quagmire's strength is that it allows a single motion-captured animation to be used in any direction, along with generating a 640x480 resolution display – the highest the N64 allows. Over 500 separate motion captures have been made for the game, including those to animate the famous *NBA Jam* moves such as ripping down the hoop or shattering the backboard. Iguana West has also mimicked more notable NBA players' signature motions to add to the atmosphere.

The game's traditional playmode has been augmented with the kind of reality-chasing options that are now so in vogue among sports game creators. A full five-on-five 'simulation' match can be hosted, while over 300 actual players from the NBA leagues have been mapped onto the in-game models. In addition, a team management system has been implemented for stats-lovers, while a selection of 'historic' situations can be re-enacted.

Edge's only real nagging doubt about *NBA Jam '99* is whether the rapid play system of the original can be successfully carried into 3D. Quagmire is undoubtedly a powerful engine, but few have shifted polygons at the same rate as yesteryear's sprites. However, hoping Acclaim Sports' recent drive to create attractive propositions continues, *NBA Jam '99* should prove an action-packed outing.

Format: **Nintendo 64**

Publisher: **Acclaim**

Developer: **Iguana West**

Release: **November**

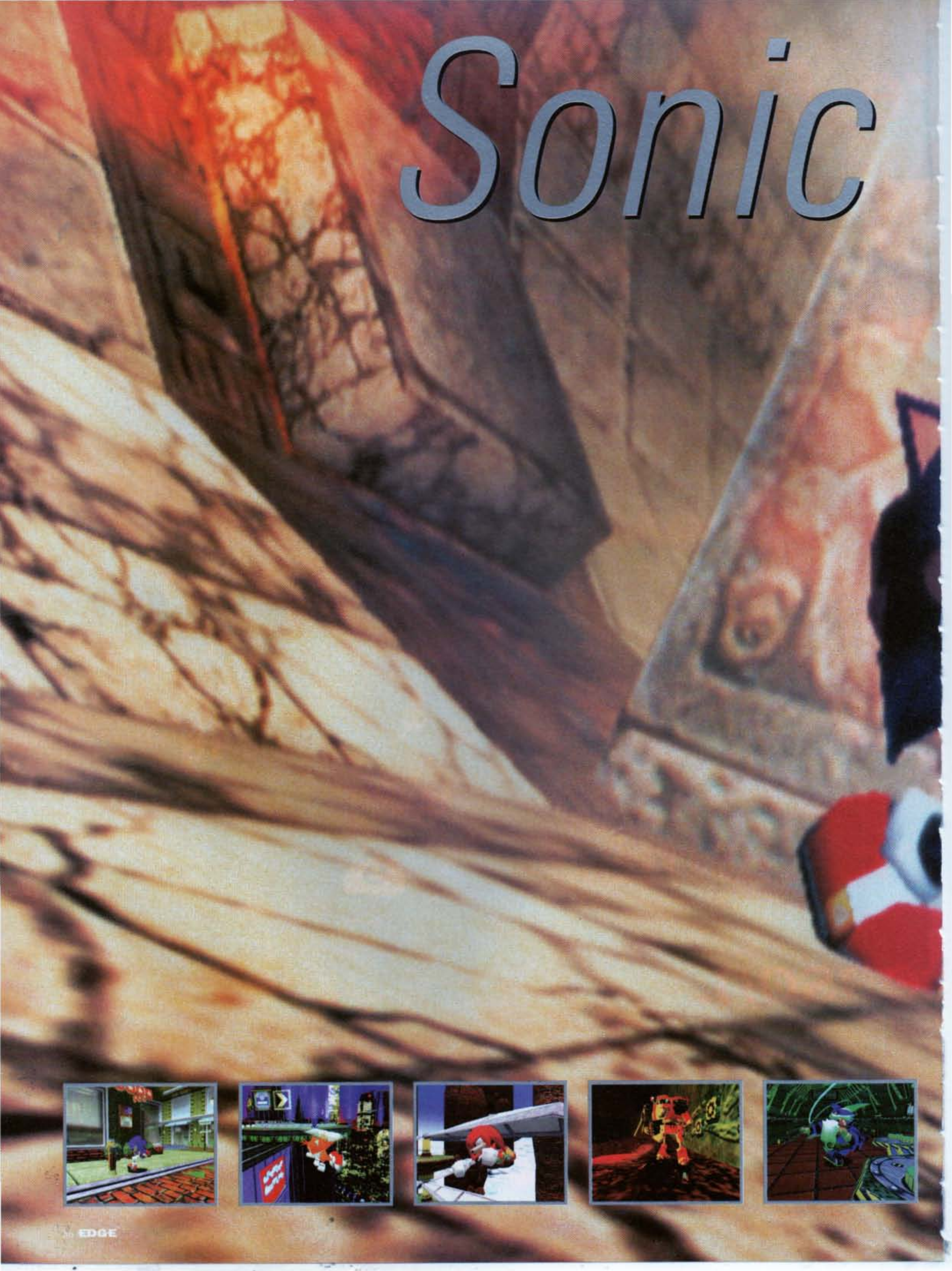
Origin: **US**



Every player in the NBA leagues has been snapped and scanned



Sonic



boom boy

It must have been an easy decision for Sega. Armed at last with a competitive console, who could resist reincarnating a 16bit gaming legend?

Once upon a time, in a videogame galaxy far, far away, a fast-moving blue hedgehog was king. In a 16bit world where virtually every game character had technically less, yet playably more, depth than their 3D descendants, Sonic's public profile was second to none. Even Nintendo devotees would conceed that in the west, Sega's leading light easily matched Mario in popularity, if not always in gameplay. His appearance on the Saturn in *Sonic Jam* was a dilute collection of the previous titles and seemed curious – even absurd – given the machine's 2D mastery. Sonic Team leader Yuji Naka now admits that they simply wanted to created something different after multiple *Sonic* outings, although 14 million units of the earlier titles were sold. But after testing the 3D water with *NiGHTS* and *Sonic Jam*, they decided to resurrect their famous progeny for the PowerVR-based Dreamcast.

Constructed around the classic *Sonic* gameplay elements of speed, collecting rings, and, well... more speed, *Adventure* features a 3D playground for the hedgehog and his fans to enjoy. However, certain sections of the game will be on rails, forcing the character along what is essentially a fixed path (similar in essence to Crystal Dynamics' *Pandemonium*), although the camera moves around the action. Other areas feature true 3D action, coupled with a slower pace of gameplay, with almost *Mario*-like platforming.

When shifting its polygons at full pelt, *Sonic Adventure* is nothing less than stunning, with the heroic hedgehog racing around loops and even plummeting down the sides of buildings. In the demo that **Edge** has witnessed, the action occasionally pauses for Sonic to grab on to the landing skids of a helicopter, which then carries him off to a fresh bout of rapid action. If the complete version of the game features enough touches such as this, coupled with multiple routes through the levels and the claimed five minutes it takes to traverse them, then the Sonic Team should be on to a winner.

While the game's plot picks up on familiar themes, with Sonic out to defeat archenemy Dr Eggman (changed to Dr Robotnik in the west), a pocketful of new and old compadres will be available for the player to utilise. It's this area of the title that led to its development nickname of 'Sonic RPG', due to the degree of interaction that the protagonists have. The six playable characters have differing talents and alternate takes on the overall story, only becoming available once you've guided Sonic to them. Interestingly, Sonic and friends have gained the ability to speak, although as yet only the Japanese voice talent has been cast.

In order to maintain the maximum sensation of speed, it's clear that the development team has had to make sacrifices. Some of the game's distant backdrops are merely 2D planes, not the deeper environments that Dreamcast's supposed 30,000 polygons per frame (at 60fps) suggested. When Sonic
















The number of polygons that *Sonic Adventure* uses to generate its characters is perhaps the most noticeable advance. 60fps update and pretty lighting are now commonplace – but too many digital heroes end up looking 'chunky' or blocky




Sonic and co are able to approach the various levels using markedly different techniques, which bodes well for the game's long-term appeal. The degree of success depends on which you choose

is making his rapid descent down the skyscraper, the amount of pop-up is almost as startling as the speed. Presumably this is being worked on in time for the game and console's launch date, but **Edge** thought such problems would be a thing of the past. But graphical effects such as lighting and anti-aliasing, which it's been claimed the new PowerVR chipset delivers with ease, are rife.

The initial cityscape area, Speed Highway, appears to be the most complete, although the others seen by **Edge**, which included the (predictably) snowy Ice Camp and a vast canyon stage called Red Mountain, seemed to be in the process of final polishing. Interestingly, Sega's demonstration software links specific characters to each stage, although it's thought that all will be available to play with on each level of the finished game. Sonic speeds around the city, Knuckles was drifting about, digging into the canyon, while Tails was seen racing down a snow-draped mountain on a snowboard with an avalanche following close behind. All three demos feature the traditional Sonic rings being gathered by the characters, with the new 'chaos emerald' collectables also making an appearance. In Red Mountain Knuckles was able to bury down into the ground in search of these, guided by a blinking icon showing how close one is. As yet, only one other area has been named; the Lost World level for which the Sonic Team visited South America to research its graphic design.

Finding the chaos emeralds is essentially at the core of *Sonic Adventure*. The current demonstration version of the game opens with a dramatic FMV sequence (apparently




This yet-to-be-named area seems almost nightmarish, washed over with red and green lighting. Sega is being coy about what the finished product entails

Six-sided Sonic

Perhaps *Sonic Adventure*'s most innovative touch is that you'll be able to play as one of six characters, each with different abilities. In addition to Sonic, there will be Tails, Knuckles, Amy Rose, Big Cat and E-102. Here Edge outlines how each is thought to play.



The boy blue himself, having survived the transition to Dreamcast intact, has returned to his roots, racing and looping with finesse. You'll also be able to employ some new moves, including a homing attack – which is presumably necessary to overcome difficulties with 3D combat.



A bit of a mystery this one, as it's claimed to be a Dr Eggman creation. E-102 is a highly accurate combat robot, which presumably can be used to pick off various targets. As such, E-102 is the first playable character in a *Sonic* game to have a weapon.



One of the new additions to the *Sonic* creed, Big's USP is that he carries a fishing rod everywhere he goes (because cats like fish, right?). Sega's story is that Big lived with a frog who swallowed a chaos emerald and disappeared, causing the cat to embark on the Sonic Adventure.







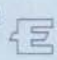
This shot is from Speed Highway, the first stage of *Adventure*. Characters are slung about as if trapped in a surreal pinball table, ricocheting off buildings and flying around giant loops. It's impressive, but Edge is waiting to see how it *plays*



1.8 million polygons per second isn't enough for Sega's artists), showing a flood of water bursting through a city, culminating in it forming into the head of a gigantic monster. This creature is Dr Eggman's latest attempt to conquer the world, and only by stopping it from finding all the chaos emeralds can Sonic win through.

As Yuji Naka mentioned in **Edge**'s interview last issue, Sonic Team has decided to score *Adventure* with a rock soundtrack rather than using dance music. The little of it that **Edge** has heard indicates a worrying similarity to mid-'80s soft metal (the distant rustle of letters from Whitesnake fans is already in the air). Sega has actually put samples of the game's music on its Japanese Website (www.sega.co.jp), so that fans can download at their leisure. However, the developers at least deserve praise for trying something a little different from the techno tunes that drizzle through so many European releases.

Overall, *Adventure* looks to be a promising release; one that should at least catch the massmarket's eye if nothing else. From what has so far been revealed, **Edge** has nagging doubts about what the true performance of Dreamcast will be. Certainly, onscreen deficiencies such as the severe pop-up were not expected, although the pace of action during that stage was incredible. The game is certain to be packed with events, as episodes like the avalanche on the Ice Camp stage and whirlwinds appear elsewhere, but Speed Highway seemed rather too linear. *Sonic Adventure*'s real impact will only be felt if its gameplay matches up to the expectation and anticipation that surrounds it. Sega is returning to its roots with a powerful, populist console and the return of an old mascot – albeit a western one. Sonic never enjoyed the same degree of fame on home turf, raising questions about *Adventure*'s suitability as a launch title in Japan. But with that introduction only weeks away now, the final confirmation of whether the bouncing blue wonder can cut the three-dimensional mustard will soon be known.









Judging by what's been seen of *Sonic Adventure* so far, Sega's team is attempting to pack its game full of jaw-dropping 'events'. At one stage, a series of whirlwinds are used to whip Sonic up into the air



Strong-willed, energetic, looking for romance and likes to attack people with a hammer – **Edge**'s kind of lady. Amy decides to battle with Dr Eggman after discovering his predeliction for stealing birds. Although her true feelings for Sonic aren't yet known...



In contrast to Tails, Knuckles is Sonic's rival – albeit a friendly one. Bizarrely tagged 'Master of the Emeralds of the Island in the Sky', his skill as a mole is to dig. This certainly implies that selected areas will only be accessible to him.



Apparently a great admirer of Sonic, Tails' name is (rather obviously) derived from the fact he has two such appendages and can use them for propulsion. In the game he builds a powerful biplane called Tornado, which screenshots show Sonic using to combat a gigantic airship.

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

It's one of the most firmly established sci-fi conventions, and it's about to get a radical late-'90s videogame overhaul. Edge looks at the next generation of strategy combat games...



Creator Binary Asylum believes *Star Trek: New Worlds* to be a significant step forward for the PC strategy game genre. The polygonal worlds play a big part



Unlike previous videogame interpretations of the 'Star Trek' licence, *New Worlds* features a clean interface which does not hinder the action at all

It's a sweltering, sticky, late-summer afternoon in Bath, but **Bob Wade** and his team are in a distinctly 'indoors' mood as work continues apace on their latest project, a massively ambitious, realtime strategy title built within the alien realms of the 'Star Trek' universe.

"Look for the red stamp on these images around here – that shows that they've been approved by Paramount in the States for use in the game," says Wade, swivelling the chair in his office as he gesticulates towards three walls almost entirely plastered with sketches, renders and general ephemera relating to the evergreen 'Star Trek' phenomenon. Except that, even to the hardest of hardcore 'Star Trek' fan, these elements are new – Wade and designers at codeshop Binary Asylum have engineered them almost from scratch.

"You can tell from the amount of buildings and ground-based vehicles that this is completely new territory," elaborates Wade, "but the cooperation we've had from Paramount in breaking that new ground has been superb.

"Everything in terms of models and artwork has to go by Paramount to be approved – which a lot of people feel is a problem that can hold them back, but from our point of view it's completely the opposite because we have a great relationship with them in terms of their input to the project."

The project in question is certain to cause quite a stir within a PC gaming community obsessed with the development of strategy wargaming.

"I still haven't seen a strategy game using a full three-dimensional engine," says Wade. "Although I really wouldn't call what we're doing a wargame. There is a lot of action and blowing things up but I wouldn't really say wargame – I think that beckons the wrong kind of emphasis. The emphasis here is much more on the traditional 'Star Trek' universe, with exploring and establishing. There *is* plenty of action in there but I would steer clear of the wargame tag."

So how *should* it be viewed?

"It's going to take 'Star Trek' games into a totally different dimension; it's going to break a huge amount of new ground for strategy games. I think 'Star Trek' fans are going to love it as well as people who haven't seen 'Star Trek' before – if there are any out there, that is – and I expect it to be huge. There's been no hype about it at all – we've kept very quiet about it up to this point – but I think it is going to live up to every claim that is made for it."

New worlds

The game certainly worked more than a few ECTS attendees into a lather. A revelation on an Interplay stand packed to overflowing with attention-wrenching titles, it enjoyed a steady stream of bods eager to see what Binary Asylum is doing with two such beloved interests.







Commanding individual units is obviously a key aspect of gameplay. Each element is cleanly rendered and distinctive

Inside the Asylum

Binary Asylum was formed five years ago by Bob Wade and Andy Wilson, two industry veterans bored with journalism and ready to try their hands at producing the things they'd been writing about (for nearly a decade in Wade's case).

The company's first title, *Zeewolf* (below), was an entertaining *Virus*-esque helicopter combat sim for the Amiga which arrived towards the end of the platform's lifespan. Since then the company has produced a sequel, but little else, prompting some to wonder just what happened to the ambitious outfit. Truth is, various projects, including one for the Sega 32X, have





come and gone without seeing the light of day. But it's all been healthy experience, according to the team.

"The *Zeewolf* games were a very good grounding for doing a title like *Star Trek*," says Wade. "Obviously our 3D engine now is a million light years away from some of the games on the Amiga, but in terms of the basic 3D techniques of doing a 3D game they were really good with regard to your interaction with a 3D world – the fact that every object in there had a purpose and a use – and in creating the kind of 3D world that you can immerse yourself in which had a level of believability."



Although the emphasis is very much on strategy, expect plenty of explosions...

Star Trek: New Worlds is set in 2292. In the Neutral Zone – a 'quiet' area of space situated more or less equidistantly between Federation, Romulan and Klingon territories – a spatial anomaly has created a clutch of fresh new worlds. Each of the three races is keen to explore these fledgling planets, although their motivations differ considerably: the Federation, for example, is simply keen to investigate the phenomenon behind their birth, while the Klingons are in it for honour and riches.

After selecting a race from the three diverse types on offer, players delve into 25 missions of construction and conflict over the varied terrain styles offered by the new planets.

Gone are the clichéd Starship bridges seen in previous 'Star Trek' titles; in their place is an elegant, easy-to-use interface that appears to make the manipulation of game elements a relative breeze.

And, if Binary Asylum's claims are to be believed, it's not just a case of nudging a bunch of troops around a map while maintaining factories – there's much more to it than that.

"The difference from most existing strategy games is that it has a great deal more background stuff going on," says Wade. "It's not just a huge armada of tanks up against another guy with a huge armada of tanks – there's a lot more complexity to the gameplay, a lot more plot interaction, a lot more character development, just a lot more depth than people are used to in this kind of strategy title."

And then there's the whole 3D aspect of the equation, of course.



These shots come from a 3D-accelerated version, but a software version will also be available

Strategies in 3D

"While people have come up with stuff like *Incoming* and *Battlezone*, which have used extremely good 3D engines, they're not really strategy titles, they are either firstperson shooters or the strategy element is limited," reckons Wade. "Everybody should work towards the full strategy game in 3D. As yet I've seen nothing that comes close to what we are doing."

The 3D environments of the game give it a feel like no other game of this ilk. The

"It's not just a huge armada of tanks going up against another huge armada of tanks – there's a lot more complexity"





Just about every structural element of the game has been created by Binary Asylum's designers in conjunction with Paramount staff in the US







With a raft of new planets to explore (and potentially conquer), expect a bundle of varied landscape styles

attention to detail probably contributes significantly here, too: after selecting a structure to build, units appear and actually create them, panel by panel, in realtime. It really does make a difference – especially when you realise that your resources don't match your ambition, leaving a semi-constructed building looking a sorry sight among your otherwise perfectly realised developments (which can include Hydroponics Bays, Photon Artillery Launchers, plus loads more besides).

Polygon-generated vehicles inhabit the 3D universe of *Star Trek: New Worlds*, and, in keeping with what Wade was saying earlier, they're new and unique to the 'Star Trek' series. Federation Phaser Tanks, Klingon Mobile Disruptor Batteries and Romulan Tanks are but a handful of the craft in the game, and they all retain the familiar design values of their respective races, albeit in ground-based form. (They retain some of their space-based counterparts' capabilities, too – Romulans have access to Cloaking Tanks, for example. With these adversaries, therefore, players would be well advised to exercise caution with a seemingly harmless-looking pair of Romulan tanks in open space – there could be a couple of surprises waiting to be sprung.)

Beyond all of the ingame technology, though, there's the characterisation element that Wade and his cohorts believe will push the game further away from staid *C&C*-style territory. "Obviously what you are not seeing up on the walls here is the character interaction within the game. We don't want to give too much away – there is a very strong element of characters in there: you know, you effectively have a crew throughout the game. It's probably

Romulans have access to Cloaking Tanks – players should therefore exercise caution when approaching them in open space

not giving too much away to say that it doesn't feature the original crew in a mission-by-mission basis; you are going to have your own crew effectively from scratch, but part of that crew develops and whether they survive or not is pretty much under your control, but there will be a very strong character element in there."

In command of a crew, you'll have to deal with their development over time, making command decisions that might well call for the expenditure of a number of red-sweatered individuals – but it may be that Binary Asylum is able to get away from the classic 'Star Trek' anonymity of 'supporting' crew members, an achievement that would be some feat indeed.

There's little doubt that the team behind *Star Trek: New Worlds* has the calibre to make it work as a game in its own right (the early demo viewed by **Edge** certainly bodes well) – it's the new ground Binary Asylum is looking to break that will be the litmus test. All will become clear come 1999.







"We've come up with a lot of ideas," says Binary Asylum director Bob Wade, "and Paramount will say, 'Well, yes, the Klingons would have something like that' or, 'That's the wrong look.' So it's been really interesting having to create a huge amount of imagery from very little that has previously appeared"

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

Taking its cue from Square's paradigm creation *Final Fantasy VII*, *Silver* boasts dramatic prerendered backdrops. Stylistically Infogrames' title is pure western folklore







Thanks to Square, the west has woken up to the Japanese RPG genre. But can Euro developers compete on the same ground? Edge visits a team that dares to try...




Not everyone loved *Final Fantasy VII*. It may be hard to believe considering the masses of publicity, the near hysterical Japanese premiere and the tales of gamers bursting into tears at the emotional resonance of it all, but there were voices of dissent. Some complained bitterly that the first hour and a half was spent clicking on 'X' to follow. Others found the turn-based battle system complex and archaic. Whatever the case, *FFVII* hasn't locked up the market for ever. Before *FFVIII* comes along to mop up, there is room out there for competitors.

Which is where *Silver* comes in. Currently an incredible three years into development, this could well be the title to put Infogrames UK's (formerly Ocean's) in-house development unit back on the map after a disastrous two-year exile. It's also a distinctly Japanese-influenced RPG and will no doubt be drawing comparisons with the godfathers of the genre over the next couple of months.

The plot is certainly recognisable RPG fare. In the mythical land of Jarrah, an evil ruler named Silver makes a pact with the Chaos god Apocalypse. In return for sacrificing 100 women, Silver will be made the deity's mortal 'agent of evil', a job which carries with it plenty of malignant power – Silver's favourite sort. So, the twisted ruler sends out his son Fuge to the island of Rain to pick up the women. Fuge tells the inhabitants that the unlucky ladies are to become brides of Silver – an unpopular move, but not as much of a PR disaster as telling them that the girls are going to be slaughtered for a god of darkness. One of the women taken is the wife of David, the hero of the game; he and five friends from a rebel collective vow to bring her back and so the action begins.

Along with the familiar story elements (power-hungry sorcerer, small band of adventurers), *Silver* has naturally borrowed a few gameplay elements from the dice-and-paper D&D games that inspired the likes of *Final Fantasy*. For a start, although the main protagonist is David, the player

Currently three years into development, this could well be the title to put Infogrames UK's in-house development unit back on the map after a disastrous two year exile

can also control and direct his five companions, all of whom boast their own individual skills. David himself, for example, is a highly skilled swordsman, Sekune is good with long-range weapons, Vivienne is another accomplished sword fighter, Chiaro is a talented magician who lacks any weapon skills altogether, Jug is a huge, muscular character with hardly any magical acumen, and finally Cagen is a master of martial arts.











In keeping with the game's Dungeons & Dragons-style roots, players will be able to summon up magical spells, giving the development team a great excuse for some dazzling pyrotechnic effects. Swordplay is on offer, too, though



This diverse line-up is designed to give the player maximum flexibility and strategic depth in combat – an element which works very differently here than it does in *Final Fantasy*. As artist **Jack Wikeley** points out, "The main difference between *Silver* and *FFVII* is that *Silver* incorporates realtime rather than turn-based action. Originally, *Silver* was envisioned as a turn-based game. Rather than taking an active part in the battles yourself, the player was just expected to assign his heroes to targets. The heroes would then attack their targets until the enemy was dead. While this was happening, all the player could do was watch the ensuing battle, maybe changing spells and weapons for the heroes to help aid their progress. It was a little like *Command & Conquer* in some respects, only with three units to command!

"It soon became apparent that this didn't make for exciting gameplay," continues Wikeley, "so we introduced the directly controlled combat and it's improved the game a hundred fold. Now we have a game where you can assign your secondary heroes to attack enemies. While they attack their targets, under AI control, you are free to take part in the action using your primary hero. And as the main hero is interchangeable with the secondary heroes, the player can directly control any hero he likes."





Calling all the heroes

Essentially, then, *Silver* combines two control methods. While not in battle, the player directs his heroes (only three can be controlled at any one time) by clicking on the leader and then clicking on where you want them to go – a typical military strategy approach. In battle, however, you get direct control over one hero at a time, via a simple, yet very clever, mouse interface. Keep CTRL pressed down and push the mouse forward for a front slash, backwards to turn and slash behind the hero, and left or right to attack at either side. It's an intuitive system, and gets you much closer to the action without having to learn a network of keys. Meanwhile, the other heroes can be assigned targets and they'll go off without your help (although it's possible to take control of them at any point if they start getting beaten).





Silver's prerendered settings reveal the kind of detail realtime 3D engines cannot hope to muster. The results suit the game perfectly

Throughout the game you can also pick up and learn eight special moves. There is, for example, the Reaper which enables the player to perform a 360-degree spinning sword slash (very handy if you're completely surrounded), the Cleaver (a jump with overhead chop), the Falcon (large jump with overhead somersault chop), and the Beserker, an incredible 1,080-degree spinning slash. Again,

IT'S THE EMPHASIS ON COMBAT WHICH BETRAYS THE GAME'S INITIAL ROOTS AS A C&C-STYLE EXERCISE. THIS LEGACY IS CERTAINLY NOT A NEGATIVE THING, THOUGH ...

these extra moves add variety to the combat without adding undue complications to the interface; a smart and fun way to liven up armed confrontations.

It's the emphasis on combat which betrays the game's



The line up (from left): producer Lee Clare, lead designer Jack Wikeley, character designer Christian Johnson, scriptwriter Samantha Johnson and chief programmer Bobby Earl

The lost Tribe

Infogrames UK has not had a smooth ride as far as in-house development is concerned. Three years ago, the company (then still known as Ocean) assembled a large team named Tribe, and, to much self-generated fanfare, set about work on a number of titles including *Dawn of Darkness* (a zombie-themed *Doom* clone), *Pandemonium* (an arcade adventure featuring characters from the classic Hanna-Barbera cartoons) and *Dreadnought*, a steampunk-styled, flight-based shoot 'em up set on Mars.

A little over a year later everything went pear shaped. *Dawn of Darkness* was [illegible] to the shelves as a budget title, [illegible] was [illegible] and released as a piece of [illegible], and *Dreadnought* was axed after two years in development, as only one playable level had been completed. The team responsible has since started up its own company and is still working on the game which Infogrames intends to publish.

Many of those currently working on *Silver* were members of the Tribe team, but they assert that things have changed since then. Almost all development attention is being focused on the game and work is nearing completion. The Tribe moniker has, perhaps understandably, been dropped.

initial roots as a completely *C&C*-style exercise. This legacy is certainly not a negative thing, though, as the fundamentals of that genre are echoed here to good effect. There is, for example, a certain amount of tactical depth (players can send in archers first to cause maximum damage to enemy aggressors before engaging in close

THE SIMPLE PLOT HIDES PLENTY OF DEVIOUS TWISTS AND SHOCKS, WITH OBLIGATORY ITEM/DOOR-BASED PUZZLES TO WORK OUT ALONG THE WAY. IT'S NOT ALL KILL, KILL, KILL

combat), and it's also possible to pick up eight short-range and long-range weapons, aping the many varied units of the military strategy sim.

Wakeley's argument that this is essentially an arcade RPG is also enhanced by the fact that the player cannot leave the site of a battle until every enemy is dead – encouraging a combative approach. It's a totally aggressive system, perfect for western gamers who enjoy a fight as much as wandering about talking to other characters. However, according to the team, the simple plot hides plenty of devious twists and shocks, and there are the obligatory item/door-based puzzles for the player to work out along the way. It's not all kill, kill, kill.





Silver's combat [illegible] ht way mechanism draws [illegible] ARPG *The Secret of Mana*

The good, the bad and the mad

Away from the game mechanics, *Silver* also looks impressive. All the characters, monsters, passers-by, etc, are 3D, but the 2[illegible] or so backgrounds have been prerendered in *3D Studio* – the same basic graphical system employed in *FFVII*. It is in the character design, however, where the Infogrames game most closely resembles the Square epic. The six lead characters feature the same sharp anime styling with huge shoulder-pad armour and spiky hair. They also wield similarly gigantic swords which spit out glorious lighting effects with every swing.

With the monsters, or enemies, however, Infogrames seems to have searched much more widely for its inspiration. As Wikeley makes clear, "We have about 75 enemies in the game. There are various humanoid types – orcs, ogres, lizardmen, giant rats, foot soldiers, rock golems, imps, etc. We have giant spiders, giant lobsters, bears, hounds and a werewolf. And enemies have magical abilitie like teleportation, invisibility and offensive magic. Oh, and we have mad kung fu monks – which are our personal favourites."

Not only do the many enemies look different, they also vary in intelligence and behaviour. Some are devious, some cowardly, some neutral – the imps, for example, will always attack from behind, due to their diminutive stature, and will run away when you retaliate. However, each separate monster has his/her own AI so they also act on an individual level – a neat little touch of realism.

Finally, *Silver* borrows yet further from combat-based genres with the inclusion of end-of-level bosses. During the game you'll encounter the likes of the swamp beast (which









Photography: Nick Wilson

Infogrames UK is putting its weight behind *Silver*, with a core development team of 17 people. Unusually, the game's script was penned by a woman, Samantha Johnson. It will be interesting to see how her influence is felt in gameplay terms. Judging by the content of the team (right), though, she's *slightly* outnumbered







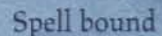


has huge claws with which to tear unwitting heroes to pieces), Draco the Ice Dragon and Rat God, a massive, sewer-dwelling rodent. Many of these can only be killed with the right kind of magic (use fire magic on the Ice Dragon, for example) so players have to make sure they're adequately equipped before they get into any end-of-level brawling.

As for the scenery, there are seven lands in all – six of which emanate from a central hub called Haven where the player can meet up with rebel compatriots and learn special moves. This wheel-like map-design means that the player can tackle the (currently) 27 available missions in a variety of orders – there is no linear structure guiding every element of the player's progress. Like the inhabitants of Rain, these landscapes are suitably varied, ranging from small villages filled with Tudor-style huts and lodges to bustling harbours and Roman-looking amphitheatres.

Impressively, too, there seems to be a lot of non-game-related activity in each area, with nonplayer characters going about their business in the background. Like the creature AI, this creates a sense of plausibility – something which CD-ROM-based RPGs will need if they are to compete with Internet, sustained-world titles like *Ultima Online*.





Spell bound

Magic is also an important part of the modern RPG – not just because of its role in Tolkien-esque mythology, but because it gives the artists an excuse to dazzle the player with amazing lighting effects. You have to collect eight magical orbs to defeat the eponymous dictator. These give the heroes a huge range of supernatural abilities, as Wikeley explains: "Each type of magic effect has three levels. With each increase in level the spell gets stronger and more visually impressive. So, from eight orbs you have about 40 different spells at your disposal."

These spells are mostly built around the elements. Fire magic creates huge fire balls and fire columns, ice magic creates stalagmites, earth magic produces meteor showers, and so on. It's also possible to heal wounded heroes and slow enemies down, showing that no sorcerer's stone has been left unturned in the quest for a varied and authoritative magic system.



In fact, what impresses here is the sheer amount of thought that seems to have been put into the game. The massive range of creatures, weapons and spells, the varied landscapes, the imaginative control system – it all suggests *Silver* has been a labour of love. Add to all this the promise of a multiplayer battle arena patch, 50,000 words of dialogue (which the player can experience as text or audio),

THE MASSIVE RANGE OF CREATURES, WEAPONS AND SPELLS, THE VARIED LANDSCAPES, THE IMAGINATIVE CONTROL SYSTEM – IT ALL SUGGESTS SILVER *HAS BEEN A LABOUR OF LOVE*

and a fabulous prerendered sequence (featuring the voice of Tom Baker, no less), and you get a game which edges towards the epic proportions usually expected from Japanese games of this kind. Infogrames UK needed something special to exorcise the memory of Tribe. *Silver* could be it.





If you're using magic, then a little thought needs to be expended before letting loose. It's a little like 'paper, scissors, stone'; blasting an ice dragon with ice doesn't have much effect. Fireballs, however, deliver the kind of evaporative experience you might expect



project x

It's not a traditional console, it's capable of handling over 1.5 billion instructions per second, and it could be installed in millions of homes within a matter of years. Edge takes a closer look at VM Labs' Project X technology

THE X FILES

As reported elsewhere this month, the European Computer Trade Show is a brash, glitzy event, its barrage of videos, lollipop game characters and hired female flesh capable of threatening the sanity of even the most hardened industry veteran. Upstairs on the Gallery level, though, a collection of more restrained suites offers some respite from the mess elsewhere. One of these, a windowless affair, bears two simple notices: 'VM Labs' and 'By appointment only'. Inside this innocuous suite sits the guts of what has been variously termed the 'future of home videogaming' and 'the 3DO for the late '90s' – Project X.

Inside the suite, ebullience does not appear to be on the agenda of **Richard Miller**, chairman and CEO of VM Labs. **Edge**'s presentation is about the twentieth he's made today, and cynics might conclude that he'd rather be talking to potential software partners than videogames publications. (The production of a dictaphone elicits a rather tired, "It's okay, I'm getting used to it.")

After presenting a prototype of the system's joypad (see overleaf), Miller moves on to outline VM Labs' launch strategy for Project X. "It will launch in the US, Japan and Europe almost simultaneously next year – Europe will be a little bit behind – but the European DVD market predictions are very strong. We're looking at a localised, regionalised content for European regions, working with all the major publishers and developers over here. Obviously my background is the UK, and I want to move back to this country in the future, so I'd like to see a successful launch over here."

Indeed, throughout the duration of the show **Edge** spies representatives from many major publishers milling in and out of VM Labs' diminutive booth, showing that, even if they're not yet committed to producing titles for the format, names as big as Acclaim are at least sniffing around to see just what it can do.

"Project X is a very compelling model from a publisher's perspective," claims Miller. "We're finding that the early adopters of DVD players are largely a superset of early game adopters, so by publishing on our platform you're not only capturing the next wave of game developers but you're also looking at an expanded market of gamers – a lot of casual, accidental gamers; people who've never played games before. We're not launching this product as a console, we're launching this as an enhanced interactive DVD player, and some of the buyers won't even have played games before."

This is an important aspect of the entire Project X strategy. Whereas 3DO aimed chiefly at existing gamers (and, indeed, Miller did himself with the Jaguar chipset he designed while at Atari), VM Labs isn't targeting current PlayStation or Nintendo 64 owners. Miller's vision appears to be a 'dream machine' – an electronic entertainment system for the whole family.

"It will be marketed and distributed differently to a games console," clarifies Miller. "Next year DVD players will be retailing for about $299 – that type of product is not going to be sold in the same outlets where a games machine is going to be sold for $99. It is a different market, it's more of a family purchase. Eventually the prices will come down to compete more directly with consoles, but next year, maybe even 2000, we're not going head to head with consoles, we're not going to have a 'firecracker' launch in the same way every console has, and part of the reason is that we don't have to. A Project X interactive DVD player is a great product, it's a great DVD player, it's a better machine than a standard DVD player, with better trick modes, a better user interface, lots of extra features. We've managed to break this chicken-and-egg problem. What Project X isn't going to do is come out and go wham bam, here's a great new game console – it's going to gradually permeate the home through the video entertainment kit they're going to buy anyway."

x project x project x project

Fringe benefits?

VM Labs is acutely aware of the narrow market which videogame hardware operates within. The success of the PlayStation in taking gaming to the masses hasn't really changed this state of affairs in the grand scheme of things, as Miller confirms: "No territory has ever achieved more than 20-25 per cent market penetration of a console, but you look at what's happening in audio-video equipment: successful A/V products achieve 80-100 per cent penetration and that expansion of the market is something that cannot be ignored by software publishers."

As a straight slice of audio-video equipment, Miller reasons, a Project X-enhanced DVD player can achieve penetration far in excess of that traditional 20-25 per cent figure. "Because we're selling to a much wider demographic, publishers can now justify getting involved in more niche products – girls games, for example; games that are really on the fringe," he claims. "These publishers just don't know if products like that would really have massmarket appeal; there's this little market that would like this genre of title, but publishers can't really justify selling into it because today the console business is aimed at 20- to 25-year-old boys – and it's growing older. It is a limited market which doesn't justify extensive development, publishing and marketing in the more fringe regions. So we're really excited about the way [Project X] is going to diversify the range of products that are available to gamers.

"There are lot of samey products here [at ECTS]. I'm not putting them down – there are some great games – but they're limited to a very restected number of genres and I really hope that's going to expand. I mean, the sort of stuff Jeff's doing, which is a little bit on the fringe, can now finally get massmarket appeal."

Ah yes, Jeff's stuff. Hardcore Atari veteran **Jeff Minter** has, until this point, been listening while Miller has evangelised Project X. But now it's time to see what the technology can do, thanks to the latest build of Minter's pet project, *Tempest 3000*, and he's suddenly more animated. Using a Nintendo 64 controller lashed to a rather naked-looking Project X dev kit sitting





Richard Miller (left): "Jeff [right] has very kindly donated these wonderful '2.5D' functions he's created. They're available to programmers with less experience in that sort of area"

under a suitably beefy television, Minter boots up the follow-up to his classic Jaguar 3D shoot 'em up. And, while it's not likely to blow any onlookers out of their chairs (at least not at this stage of its development), it's pleasantly impressive, with terrific filtering techniques and the kind of colour usage that has become almost synonymous with his work.

"A polygon engine would be about as much use as a boat anchor on a title like this," says Miller, referring to the free nature of Project X's architecture which has allowed Minter to program it from the ground up to suit *Tempest 3000*'s appearance. "And the only way you can achieve the effect that Jeff wants to achieve here is with a lot of MIPs – it's the only way. There's no way you could get anything like this look and feel running on a PC or a Dreamcast, and certainly not on an N64 or a PlayStation. This is something that's just totally impossible on any other platform."

"Because we're selling to a much wider demographic, publishers can now justify getting involved in more niche products – girls games, for example, games on the fringe"



"I can make games now which are distinctively in my style," says Minter. "I like this kind of abstract, very smoothed-out, very trippy stuff, and I can take *all* that hardware and make it do my stuff. I'm not trying to make some polygon library look like the way I see it in my head, I can actually make it up as I go along and have all of the hardware do everything that I want."

Software engineers working without the luxury of Minter –



The finished joypad will be slightly smaller than the version revealed by VM Labs at ECTS. Question is, will it still look as much like an accessory from a '70s sci-fi flick?

Controlling Project X

In a completely unexpected turn of events, VM Labs was brazenly showing off a prototype Project X controller during its behind-closed-doors presentations at ECTS.

The non-functioning demonstration model is overtly bulbous in style and offers many of the features expected of controllers today, including six fire buttons (although, surprisingly, no trigger support) plus D-pad and analogue-stick functions.

The underside of the joypad reveals a plug-in jolt pack (styled to fit with the curvaceous nature of the pad) and a small memory card, which fits into a separate slot.

VM Labs will not be manufacturing finished Project X DVD players, but it's clear that the company's past games experience has seen it take the design lead with controller design. (After all, who can forget the Philips CDi's atrocious joypads?)

Tempest 3000: Yak's progress

Although VM Labs wouldn't release any new images of *Tempest 3000*, programmer Jeff Minter was eager to talk Edge through what he's currently achieving with the Project X hardware:

"The first thing you'll notice is that all the vectors in the game are completely antialiased; there's no 'stepping' on those at all. And they're translucent vectors, so you get that nice glow where the vectors overlap.

"The web itself is filled with a dynamic procedural texture, which is translucent so that you can see the particle system happening behind it. That texture continuously evolves in each web in a totally different way. The background particle system on this particular demo is quite similar to the one we did for the background of the Jaguar version, but in the Jag version each particle was just a pixel; in this version each particle is a fully screened translucent disc.

"The enemies themselves are constructed out of a dynamic procedural texture which is plotted with an arc tangent function, which gives you some idea of the grunt this system has. It's a fairly hairy amount of maths to be doing.

"Even the score is drawn with a dynamic procedural plasma. One of the things I like most about this system is that you can put stupid amounts of attention to detail into the things that everyone else would go, 'Well, slap a font up there', and that'd be it. When in fact you can draw your score with a procedural plasma – and I haven't even begun to use up the full capacity of the system yet. We're still in the early days, but what I'm moving towards with this is no pixels – there'll be no visible pixels at all. And, although it may not look like it there, this game is actually running at 360x240. Because we can lavish so much care and attention on to each individual pixel that you don't have to see them any more; you can effectively increase the resolution by using such excellent antialiasing with such a large colour resolution that you don't need special resolutions to produce some great results."





***Tempest 3000* and creator Jeff Minter – still trippy after all these years**

holed up in his cosy farmhouse in rural Wales, with the time to experiment with the potential of Project X's nuances – are being supported by a number of libraries born of VM Labs technicians.

"Every polygon engine and library has a different look and feel," claims Miller. "That's why all Nintendo 64 games look pretty similar and PlayStation games look similar, but separately they look different. We have an engine that can give a Nintendo look and feel. You're not constrained to any one way of doing it. You can actually enhance the entire power of the system to whatever it is that you dream up – you're not stuck with one way of doing it. This helps to get rid of the sameyness of the games."

> "There's no way you could get anything like this look and feel running on a PC or a Dreamcast, and certainly not on an N64"

"I think that there are people who want to get their stuff up and running fast off the PC," reckons Minter, "and that's fine, they can do that – but there are also people who really get off on giving their own games a unique style."

Project X power

A further hardware demo reveals a dummy *Quake*-style 3D environment which, if not entirely convincing in an artistic sense, at least shows that Project X is more than capable of creating semi-believable, reasonably detailed gameworlds. The demo is still running at a fairly low resolution, though, and it's difficult to see why gamers should get too excited about what Project X can do. As if by way of compensation, Miller cranks up a voxel-based demo of an ice skater which, it must be said, offers realtime animation the like of which has rarely – if ever – been seen.

"Polygons are very good for a lot of things, for detail, where you don't mind angular surfaces," says Miller, now getting into his stride as his technology shows its true colours. "But voxel rendering is great for the human body. This demo would be totally impossible on any other platform; a 500MHz PC couldn't do this – a *1,000MHz* PC couldn't do this.

"And what's really interesting to us is the concept of hybrid rendering, where you mix a range of techniques – polygon rendering, voxel rendering, some raytracing, some procedural bitmaps – all to create the end effect that you want. For example, you could use a combination of voxel rendering for the bodies combined with polygon rendering in a soccer game, with 22 voxel-rendered players, and maybe polygons for some of the backgrounds – the stadium, the goalposts, etc."

And Miller is far from finished yet. "You've got to see the next demo," he says, enthusiastically. "It's a 1 or 2K piece of code and it's the only realtime raytracing system around – I don't think anybody's ever done realtime raytracing, with semi-translucent objects, shadows in realtime, light sources."

And it is impressive, almost like one of the infamous, prerendered Amiga demos that were such showcases for the format in the early-'90s – but, crucially, created totally on the fly, and with an equally acceptable framerate. "It's really neat technology," Miller gushes, leaning back in his chair.

Sound support is also in place, with a 40-voice synth that, according to Miller, "uses only a fraction of the processing resources. But the reverb and echo and surround sound capabilities are really, really outstanding. It's the first platform for a long time to really focus on audio." A grand claim indeed.

"Our goal is to make sure that this platform is programmable right down at the metal end but also at the high end," concludes Miller. "A lot of the titles are just going to use one of the polygon engines that we provide and they'll be class titles; they'll look great. It does a great job with polygons – don't let anyone tell you anything else. But we're going beyond that..." ■



The problem which the ... a few names in coin-op's hall of fame. Admittedly ...
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INSERT COINS



TO CONTINUE

…lost a certain amount of their pulling power. But this isn't the real reason why you can't play a videogame for 20p any more. The problem which the industry refuses to face

With home formats approaching coin-op quality, what now for the video arcade – once the very cornerstone of gamers' interests? Edge investigates...

Remember what it was like to be champing at the bit, waiting for Saturday afternoon to roll around so you could meet your friends down the arcade and play *Space Duel* or *Gauntlet* for five hours, all for the princely sum of £5? The typical **Edge** reader would probably answer in the affirmative. The more callow members of the video gaming fraternity, however, will probably study the above question quizzically. An afternoon in an arcade for £5? You've got to be kidding.

But the fact is, the smoky dens of iniquity where so many of today's gameplaying stalwarts cut their teeth are facing extinction. The more salient question is, why? The arcade industry in the '90s is in trouble, for several reasons. It's an exceptionally complex example of cause and effect. Most in the industry point to the explosion of home consoles as the reason why the arcade's appeal has dwindled. A fair point, but the simple fact is, coin-op dropped the ball.

While Sega and Nintendo fired their salvos of million-dollar marketing budgets at each other (and the consumer), coin-op's big players simply sat back waiting for all the fuss to die down. It didn't. So how sorry is the arcade industry? Namco Cybertainment, the biggest arcade owner in the USA, this year filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Namco wasn't in dire financial straights, but it needed Chapter 11 (a US law which protects businesses from their creditors while they get back on their feet) to re-negotiate arcade leases because, under their current rents, it was finding it difficult to make them turn a profit.

On the rocks

Meanwhile, the financial crisis in Japan is starting to create ripples. Jaleco recently closed its UK office in a bid to cut costs, and while the likes of Sega and Namco are unlikely to follow suit, rest assured there's more fall-out to come. Whether or not this is the fault of the console and PC boom is a moot point. The problem which the industry refuses to face up to is that coin-op games just aren't good enough any more. *OutRun, Pac-Man, Donkey Kong* and *Gauntlet* are just a few names in coin-op's hall of fame. Admittedly, as soon as these games could be played at home they lost a certain amount of their pulling power. But this isn't the real reason why you can't play a videogame for 20p any more.

These games were produced on printed circuit boards (PCBs) and slotted into generic

cabinets. They were cheap to make, cheap to buy and therefore cheap to play. However, the fact that they were easy to produce also made them easy to copy. Sweat shops in Korea and Taiwan churned out copies of hit games by the thousands. This meant nothing to the player – the colour of the car in *World Rally* may have been green instead of white, but who cared? In terms of playability it was the same game.

But the copying situation, coupled with the spread of consoles, caused videogame manufacturers to radically alter their strategy, the result being that the PCB was put to the sword. And so the dedicated game was born.

The games continued to get more expensive, but they were too repetitive; the market was swamped with releases (many of them pretty average) in the driving and beat em 'up genres

These games came as a complete package: software, cabinet and monitor. In addition, manufacturers looked at wide screens, moveable seats and force-feedback steering to offer the player an experience you couldn't get at home. Coupled with this was a drive to create better hardware, a trend started by Sega and the release of its Model 1 board, which brought the seminal *Virtua Racing* to market. Sega's hardware strategy was almost Stalinist – a five-board development process that would see the company continually setting the agenda.

The move towards dedicated games was gradual and initially it worked. Despite the fact these games were more expensive (Konami's *Racing Jam* retails at around £18,000 whereas, five years ago, the average PCB cost around £3,500) takings rose. Players may complain about paying £1 a game, and rightly so. But when you consider that the cost of a game has increased by some 500 per cent, an increase in price-per-play of 500 per cent isn't a bad deal.

Tides of change

But there was more trouble ahead. The games continued to get more expensive, but they were too repetitive; the market was swamped with releases (many of them pretty



Fun Land is one of the most celebrated arcades in the UK – whenever they find themselves in the capital, most hardcore gamers find the time to visit it, via the Trocadero. Namco's Wonderpark, meanwhile, is just down the road

The price is right?

Since the death of the 16bit market, and the birth of Sega, Sony and Nintendo's next generation machines, players have seen huge increases in the standard of games. Yet they're paying roughly the same amount for software now as they were for their 16bit carts. In the arcades, however, players have experienced moves from 25p and 30p per game, to 50p and £1. It's a bitter pill to swallow but, according to **Mike Nevin**, managing director of Namco Europe, it's simply a matter of economics. "Ten years ago, videogames cost around £3,500 and now they cost between £8,000 and £10,000. Obviously the operator has to make a return on that investment and that means increasing the price of play."

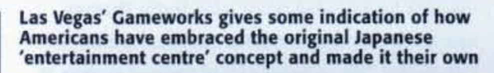
In Germany, however, the price of play has stood at DM2 for ten years. **Udo Nickel**, vice president of Nova, Europe's largest video distributor and Germany's major operator, explains: "People have only so much money in their pockets, but there are now more leisure activities to spend that money on. We increased the price of pinball games when that sector was booming, and revenues stayed the same. All that means is that less people were playing the machines – we'd forced people out of the arcades. I think games have to really offer something special to justify an increase in price." Nevin puts German stability down to two factors; a healthier economy over the last ten years, and coinage. "People are happier to spend a coin of an accepted denomination – £1, FF10, DM2. But you have to remember, the players are paying for time and if that time isn't thrilling enough, they won't put any more money in." In the US, the price of play has been stuck at 25 or 50 cents simply because a $1 coin does not exist (although one is due before the end of the year). The result? Midway is the country's only remaining major coin-op manufacturer. You can't win. Charge too much and you lose the players, charge too little and you lose the companies that make the games.



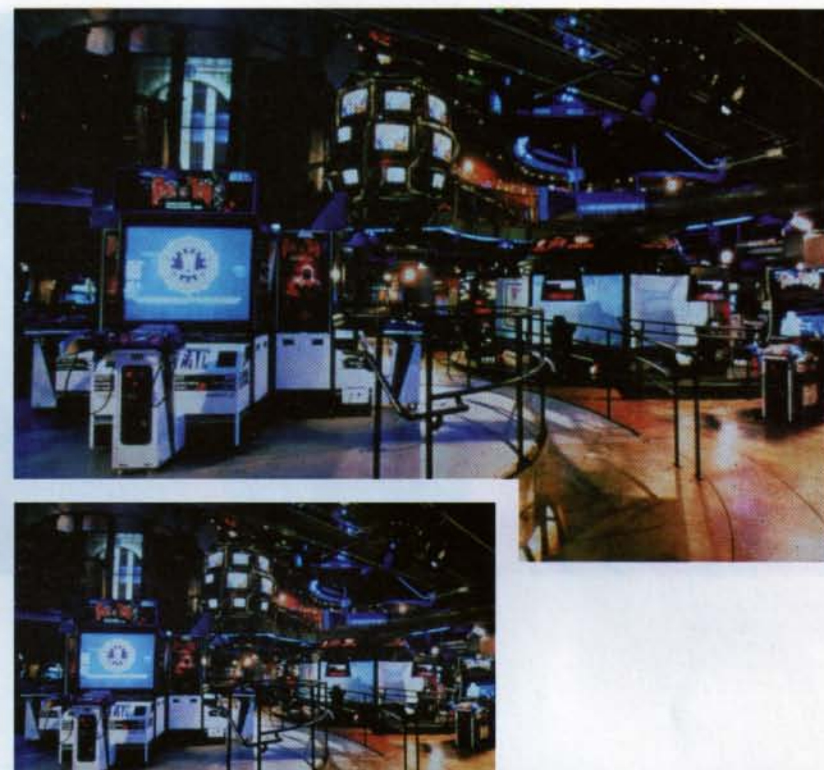


Mike Nevin (top) and Udo Nickel (above) explain the state of play abroad





Las Vegas' Gameworks gives some indication of how Americans have embraced the original Japanese 'entertainment centre' concept and made it their own



average) in the driving and beat em 'up genres. In the meantime, games in the home market, such as *Civilisation* and *Populous*, were getting more complex, with a greater depth of gameplay than ever seen before. And the market had changed – the teenagers who'd grown up on *Asteroids* and *Battlezone* were now adults seeking games that could hold an adult's attention. Another *Galaxian* – however flashy the graphics and impressive the cabinet – just couldn't cut it.

Three years ago, takings started to dip and the clouds started gathering. The larger arcades could ride the storm. But the smaller guys, the people that made their money placing machines in pubs, chip shops and kebab houses, simply couldn't afford to buy too many £15,000 super machines, particularly if they couldn't guarantee they would get their money back. Additionally, the dedicated games were just too big – exactly how many *Lost Worlds* or *Time Crisis 2*s can you fit in a chippy? More importantly, the players stayed away.

A grand day out

America was the first to identify the problem and turned to Japan for a solution, creating the first Family Entertainment Centres (FECs). The idea was, that by changing the image of the arcade from some dodgy backstreet video speakeasy to a light, safe environment

Teenagers who'd grown up on *Asteroids* and *Battlezone* were now adults seeking games that could hold their attention. Another *Galaxian* just couldn't cut it

where the family could come for a fun day out, a whole new audience would be secured. The teen dollar wasn't enough anymore – operators wanted Mum's, Dad's and little Johnny's folding stuff too. But this was a Japanese model, and the Japanese have a totally different approach to how they spend their leisure time. In Japan it's perfectly acceptable to take your girlfriend to the arcade *all* afternoon – try this





The popularity of dedicated-cabinet games, including Sega's *Daytona USA* and *The Lost World*, have sounded the death knell for some minor operators

in England and you're more likely to end up single and spitting teeth.

To a certain extent the plan worked, but for many operators, the investment required in sprucing up their locations caused as many problems as it solved. Sega Gameworks, which owns enormous arcades across the States, has had a number of financial problems, despite its MTV launches and big bucks backing (Steven Spielberg is just one of the high-profile names behind the operation). **Edge** visited the Las Vegas Gameworks in March, and what did everyone there want to play? *Quake Arcade* (ported from PC to coin-op application by USA-based LBE systems).

Creating demand

Finally, the coin-op industry has realised it needs to market itself to bring the player back to the arcade. "I really believe that the industry, from where I'm standing, needs to be marketed more," says **Justin Thomas**, operations manager of Namco Station at London's County Hall. "We're doing a lot of revenue analysis at the moment and collating data into our customer profile. We will probably use focus groups at a later stage." It's rumoured that Sega's Dreamcast console will provide a feature whereby players can store game information and transfer it to a coin-op game, and vice versa. Nintendo, too, has recently tied up a deal with Midway for its American football game *Blitz '99*. Players will be able to store scores and plays on the N64's Controller Pak and then plug it into the coin-op version.

Then there's ArcadePC, Microsoft's bid to spread its ubiquitous *Windows* software into the arcade industry. The idea was discussed two years ago, and suggested developers of PC titles should release modified coin-op versions into the arcade before they hit the High Street. It's a similar philosophy to the movie industry – the arcade would be the 'cinema', the console would be 'video'. But the whole concept has fallen into disarray. Some companies, such as the UK's Opus, are persevering with ArcadePC but are finding porting titles from console to coin-op more difficult than it was originally envisaged. Meanwhile, new locations such as The Playing Fields, in London, have started to offer high-

It's rumoured that Sega's Dreamcast console will provide a feature whereby players can store game information and transfer it to a coin-op game, and vice versa





Ed Watson (left) and Justin Thomas (right) aim to encourage gamers back into the social gaming scene

end, networked PCs running popular titles, such as *Red Alert*. And the owners' ambitions also outstrip the majority of arcade operators'. "We are trying to develop a friendly, home-type atmosphere," states managing director **Edward Watson**. "We're not trying to make the place like an arcade. The only way we can survive is by getting a community of people, who we consider our friends, to come in. It's then our job to think of ways to bind these people together."

The face of the arcade industry will change dramatically in the next five years, and there's no doubt that, with the cross-pollination of games from console to coin-op and the inexorable spread of the Internet, players could have a lot to look forward to. There is no doubt that the arcade is here to stay. In what form, however, remains to be seen.


Strider

Sega Rally

720°

Marble Madness

OutRun


Bubble Bobble


Virtua Fighter 3

Edge's virtually real arcade

The games **Edge** would have lining its walls if only the office space and editorial budget was big enough…

1. APB (Atari)
GTA's parent with a moral code
2. Gauntlet (Atari)
Multiplayer gaming came of age
3. Strider (Capcom)
Capcom's swishest of platformers
4. Sega Rally (Sega)
It's all in the hydraulics…
5. Super Sprint (Atari)
Threeplayer gaming at its best
6. Daytona USA (Sega)
The greatest arcade racer. Ever
7. Virtua Cop (Sega)
Took lightguns into the '90s
8. Hyper Sports (Konami)
Physical exertion + timing. Oh yes
9. Marble Madness (Atari)
A landmark trackball coin-op
10. 720° (Atari)
Another Atari golden-era classic
11. OutRun (Sega)
Audio-visual content to conquer all
12. Bubble Bobble (Taito)
Cute, Japanese and addictive
13. Shinobi (Sega)
Violent, Japanese and addictive
14. Juno First (Konami)
One of the true classics of the '70s
15. Virtua Fighter 3 (Sega)
If only to *really* learn its intricacies

Dedicated to success

The arcade business has hit a slump in the '90s, despite the fact that manufacturers have been more innovative in their quest for profits. Here are five games that broke the mould, and filled the cash box, this decade.

Virtua Racing

The first racing game to really go to town with polygons, thanks to Sega's Model 1 architecture. The game's success allowed Sega to really push back the barriers, releasing a deluxe model which featured life-size racing car shells that moved on hydraulic pistons according to the onscreen action.



Daytona USA

Another Sega product and another racing game. It set the all-time standard for gameplay in a coin-op. Unfortunately, the industry has found replicating its success as difficult as turning base metals into gold. Released four years ago, it continues to take good money for those operators lucky enough to have one. Sega is praying *Daytona 2*, released this summer, will follow suit, but the jury's still out.

Virtua Fighter

Yes, it's Sega again. Creating a geometric shape, such as a car, out of polygons wasn't too difficult. Creating a human being that could move like Jackie Chan was a different story. In fact, *Virtua Fighter*'s characters did move like Jackie Chan… with slight arthritis, as the hardware struggled to shift the vast number of polygons (well, vast in 1994) around the screen. But this was the closest to real-life action that coin-ops had achieved and it set the standard for the beat 'em 'up genre.



Tekken

Namco's seminal fighting game wasn't as technically extravagant as *Virtua Fighter* but its gameplay was head and shoulders above the competition. More importantly, Namco's decision to release it as a kit, as opposed to a dedicated cabinet, meant it was affordable to operators and subsequently had a lower price-per-play. This, coupled with Namco's tie-up with Sony to port the game onto PlayStation, gave the company its first serious franchise title since *Pac-Man*.



Kick it

Developed by Israeli company Interactive Light, technically this football game, which features a real ball kicked at an aperture beneath a video screen depicting goal and goalkeeper, wasn't up to the same standard as any of the above. But it was the first PC-based game to make a serious impression on the market, and illustrated just how flexible the format can be (upgrades and bespoke alterations were delivered to customers on floppy discs in a matter of days). What's more, it was relatively cheap and, more importantly, it was fun – a factor which manufacturers too often forget nowadays.

A little bit of history repeating itself



Once the playground of the hardest of hardcore underground gamers, the emulator scene recently broke into the mainstream – and it isn't about to stop. Enter the new wave of hardware sims for the PC desktop...

The first ever issue of **Edge** contained reviews of *Street Fighter II: Championship Edition*, *Viewpoint* and *Mario Collection*, released for the PC Engine, Neo-Geo and SNES respectively. That those titles would, within five years, be available on the PC via emulator packages would have seemed implausible at the time.

It's testament to the phenomenal growth of the emu scene that 16bit machines are now at least competently, and even near *completely* mimicked by programs written by coding enthusiasts. In times gone by, if a coder (or group of programmers) had a particular affinity for a game, a 'simulator' would be the inevitable result. Who can forget the endless *Space Invaders*, *Galaxian* or *Pac-Man* clones that so clogged Public Domain libraries during the '80s? Their modern C or assembly-proficient parallels, instead, create software-based imitations of actual hardware, supporting not one, but entire libraries of games.

Whereas **Edge**'s examination of the *MAME* phenomena in **E**61 revealed a surprising, almost altruistic (or, conversely, ignorance-led) apathy on the part of arcade hardware manufacturers, console emulation is not just a whole different ballgame – it's also played in a disconcertingly different park. In America, the ISDA (a larger, more confident version of the UK's FAST) responds quickly to cries of copyright infringement from the likes of Nintendo and Sega, thus limiting the supply of Web-based ROM images for both formats. Neo-Geo and PC Engine ROMs are, at present, available from well-known emu sites, but it's likely that these, too, could soon become available from 'underground' sources alone as copyright holders take stock of their availability.


Zelda III: A Link to the Past

Zelda's SNES debut, despite its relatively aged status, remains one of the most playable, engrossing and innovative titles ever conceived. It is, in fact, an almost peerless game

For pure support, the Super Nintendo is by far the darling of the 16bit emu scene. With over half a dozen 'working' packages available for download, it's interesting to see the format's one-time popularity reflected by what amount to 'unofficial tributes'. Nintendo, like Sega, guards its copyright jealously, and is quick to issue 'cease and desist' notices to those Websites distributing ROM images. Yet, despite legal minds and eagle eyes beadily observing their progress, SNES emus continue to flourish. Game ROMs remain available to those patient enough to search beyond established emu sites, broken links and discarded, inoperative 'fan' sites.

SNES emulation, however, is far less sophisticated than many would imagine. While the Mega Drive and PC Engine can boast near-'perfect' packages, developers of SNES programs are hamstrung by the lack of information available for Nintendo's hardware. So, while fledgling Super FX support is offered by the excellent *ZSNES*, DSP (Digital Signal Processor) emulation – required to run *Mario Kart*, for example – will remain unavailable for the next six months.

There was, and is, more to the Super Nintendo than Super FX- or DSP-oriented titles, though. The likes of *Super Metroid*, *Zelda* and *Mario World* – three of the greatest videogames ever created – run appreciably well through *ZSNES* or *SNES9X*. And, while the SNES suffered the traditional disparity in wheat-to-chaff ratio that so blights all console formats, the number of games that stand the test of time speaks volumes. SNES emulation, to an arguably greater

SNES emus continue to flourish. Game ROMs remain available to those patient enough to search beyond broken links and discarded, inoperative fan sites

extent than its pseudo-illicit 16bit contemporaries, provides an impressive source of genuinely enjoyable software to acquire. The legality of doing so remains no less questionable, however.

Although *ZSNES* and *SNES9X* are, without doubt, the two best SNES emulators currently available, special mention must be made of *ESNES*, *NLKESNES* and *Sneese*. Although these are of little interest to individuals seeking the best possible performance for gaming purposes, each could potentially mature into the 'perfect' SNES emulator of tomorrow. And, surprisingly, they can be made to run on a dated 486 PC, should the player disregard the irritation that is a near-nonexistent framerate. But, as the *Sneese* team so wisely states in the .doc file enclosed with its program: 'For true SNES emulation, buy a SNES…'

The SNES scene appears ultra-competitive, with accusations of 'industrial espionage' made between the developers of *SNES9X* and *ZSNES*. The *SNES9X* team alleges that a member of its rival's team joined the *SNES9X* fold, and stole code and information on the SNES sound chip before passing that back to the the *ZSNES* team. The *ZSNES* coders, naturally, dispute this. Such competition can, of course, only be of benefit (and, perhaps, worth the occasional exasperated chuckle) for those who covet a fully functioning SNES emulator. Both titles are excellent; the C-based *SNES9X* achieving a great deal to almost rival the speeds attained by the assembly-only *ZSNES*. **Edge** prefers the latter, but can't help but admire the former.

As if developer in-fighting were not enough, the SNES emulation fraternity has an intriguing tale to tell. An emu known as *Silhouette* has long been a favourite among enthusiasts, thanks to its wide ROM image support, but also by virtue of a .doc file that accompanies its release. In it, an individual purporting to be an ex-Nintendo employee talks of an NOA-approved project to create an official Super Nintendo emulator for the PC. He, we are told, was given the task of converting the Mac-based SNES development system into a fully fledged program capable of running ROM files at a quality comparable or identical to the 'real' system. Alas, he relates, the project was canned and he left NOA, yet he felt compelled to release the alpha version and, subsequently, continue the project on an anonymous basis. A real-life videogaming Robin Hood, or an imaginative crank? **Edge** would love to hear from the coder in question, but finds the 'anonymity' aspect of the tale questionable – if this person actually worked within NOA, on such a 'niche' project, surely the company has sussed his identity?



SUPER NINTENDO

Edge recommends:
ZSNES400 **(or a higher version)**

Sound emulation: Yes

Joypad support: Yes

Multiplayer support: Twoplayer

Save game: Yes

Extra features: SNES mouse support, early Super FX support, multiple saves, GUI, cheat codes, config file

Worth a look: *Super Metroid*, *ISS Deluxe*, *Zelda*, *Mario World*, *Secret of Mana*, *Sonic* (an apparently enthusiast-coded SNES debut for Sega's mascot. Awful, but interesting to behold…)


ISS Deluxe


FF: Mystic Quest


Secret of Mana


Shadowrun


Super Mario AllStars

Konami's *ISS Deluxe* (top) is, arguably, the most engrossing football game available for the PC. *Shadowrun* – coded by the now-resurgent Beam Software – is an unsung RPG classic, and a game fans of the genre are advised to find


Super Mario Kart


Super Metroid

Far left: DSP emulation is still in its infancy, making *Super Mario Kart* and *PilotWings* titles emu owners can only dream about. Fortunately, *Super Metroid* (left) plays just as well as it ever did


Sonic the Hedgehog


NHL '95


OutRun


Desert Strike

One of these shots is not a Mega Drive game. And, surprisingly, it's *Sonic* (top) – the picture is taken from an 'unofficial' SNES version

Sega's Mega Drive, in contrast to the almost inevitable success of the NES-superseding SNES, was the 'wild card' of 16bit gaming. Though a relative failure in its manufacturer's home market, it captured the imagination of Western gamers, earning itself a deserved position in console gaming history. Its 68000 CPU and its Z80 co-processor are, when compared to the SNES hardware, relatively easy to get to grips with – as both *Genesyst* and *Kgen '98* attest.

Genesyst and *Kgen* are, in a number of respects, standard-bearers for the emulation scene. Both cope with aplomb on all but the lowest-specced PC, and run comfortably well on, say, a P133. Owning both offers the greatest level of compatibility with various ROMs. Obviously, ownership of these – without having purchased a copy of the original cartridge – is no less illegal than with any other format, although it's worthy of note that Mega Drive ROMs appear somewhat more difficult to locate.

Edge finds it hard to favour either emu, with both boasting approachable GUIs and near-perfect synthesis of the games used to test both. *Kgen*, however, is singular in its support for *OutRun*, a title many Sega devotees will be keen to rediscover. Both use assembly language – although *Genesyst* uses C for certain tasks – while support for twoplayer games is available in both.

It's noteworthy, however, that many of the best Mega Drive titles look notably less impressive when set against the inevitable backdrop of their modern-day equivalents. The EA Sports games, once benchmarks for their genre and often far superior to the SNES conversions that followed, are now of curiosity value alone – their modern-day equivalents are exponentially superior. Hindsight may suggest that the inaugural releases of the NHL and FIFA franchises are, historically, of greater significance than *World Cup '98* or *NHL '98*, but their role in the closing half or quarter of the decade is as five-second 'curios', and little more.

For the Mega Drive, there are few *Metroids* or *Zeldas*; titles that stand the test of time by virtue of their incredible design. The *Sonic* games retain their throwaway charm, and there are undoubtedly many titles capable of grabbing a misty eyed gamer's attention, but all too few Mega Drive games can compete with their late-'90s equivalents – a revealing fact.

The 16bit era, though dominated by the heavyweight presence of Nintendo and the upstart vigour of Sega, also saw NEC's PC Engine and SNK's Neo-Geo make a lasting mark upon the industry. NEC's machine enjoyed an admirable level of success in its native Japan, yet failed to catch the imagination of the Western public – thanks, in no small part, to the dismal marketing campaign that so blighted its US launch. The Neo-Geo, though, was never intended as a true, mainstream product – it was, in essence, a scaled-down arcade board, capable of supporting near or perfect 'arcade quality' conversions of SNK-originated and thirdparty software. Pitched at a niche, 'hardcore' market, its retail price made it inaccessible or unattractive to the casual gamer.

The 16bit era, though dominated by Nintendo and Sega, also saw NEC's PC Engine and SNK's Neo-Geo make a lasting mark upon the industry


Wonderboy III

Wonderboy (and his many adventures) never really made an impact in Europe. PCE emus enable western gamers to see why

The emu-creating fraternity has, nonetheless, embraced both formats with a surprising degree of enthusiasm, with the comparatively less complex architecture of the PC Engine replicated in a greater number of packages. The best of these, *Magic Engine*, is unusual within emu circles in that a 'registration' fee is required to use the package in its full form. Those using a basic Shareware version procured from a Website can enjoy its laudable frame update, excellent ROM image compatibility and easy-to-use interface, but sound support remains tantalisingly unavailable until the requisite fee is paid.

Other PC Engine emulators are of an inferior quality, requiring a powerful Pentium and a forgiving nature on the part of the player. *VPCE* – or *Virtual PC Engine* – is currently the only other PCE program worth perusing. The option to run games in a desktop window, and its reasonable framerate on a mid-range Pentium, make it an able (though markedly less powerful) deputy to *Magic Engine*.

PC Engine emulation is, in a number of senses, rather defunct by default. The main appeal of the original system was its incredibly accurate – for the time – conversions of popular arcade machines. But, with *MAME* and other, more specialised arcade emus also available, vast portions of its once cutting-edge software catalogue are rendered obsolete by the 'free' availability of their


1943


Shinobi

Although Capcom currently focuses on its 'bread and butter' (*Resident Evil* and *Street Fighter*), **Edge** would love to see an update of its classic *194X* series (PCE version, left)



MEGA DRIVE

Edge recommends: ***Kgen '98***

Sound emulation: **Yes (stereo)**

Joypad support: **Yes**

Multiplayer support: **Twoplayer**

Save game: **Yes**

Extra features: **Game Genie code support, battery back-up saves, six-button Sega pad support, excellent GUI**

Worth a look: **The *Sonic* games, *Aladdin*, *OutRun*, *Mean Bean Machine*, the *Shining Force* RPGs, *Desert Strike* and *Sonic Crackers* (allegedly an unfinished *Sonic* game abandoned by Sega. Edge, however, has its doubts...)**



PC ENGINE

Edge recommends: ***Magic Engine***

Sound emulation: **Yes (registered version only)**

Joypad support: **Yes**

Multiplayer support: **Twoplayer**

Save game: **Yes**

Extra features: **Excellent GUI, support for original CD-based games (via PC drive only), early SuperGrafx emulation**

Worth a look: ***New Zealand Story*, *R-Type*, *Twin Cobra*, *Salamander*, *Columns***


R-Type


Ninja Spirits

Arguably the PC Engine's greatest asset – an *R-Type* conversion (top). But the arcade original is also available…

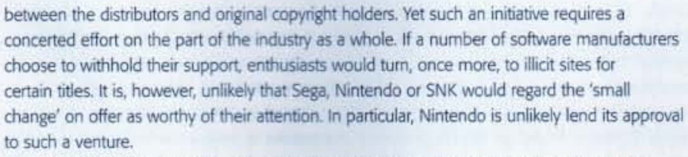
more illustrious cousins. One-time owners of the format will doubtlessly wish to re-examine old favourites, but the PC Engine's comparative lack of 'native' software support – so integral for the SNES and Mega Drive – make it the Ibiza of emulated consoles. Its reputation precedes it, and it's 'interesting' to visit, but you wouldn't necessarily wish to live there…

Neo-Geo emulation is currently supported by the sole standard bearer that is *NeoRage*. With the Neo-Geo hardware being, in essence, the same as SNK's MVS (Multi Video System) board, the development team behind Rage – an excellent MVS emu – simply adapted its code to create *NeoRage*. Although currently lacking sound support, its support of Neo-Geo software is growing with each successive release, and aural accompaniment is promised within the near future.

But, as with the PC Engine, why should gamers seek out domestic versions of Neo-Geo games when arcade originals are so readily available? Thankfully, there's an obvious, and pleasing, reason: *NeoRage* supports both, and allows players to switch between 'arcade' and 'home' versions. For those instances where one is superior to the other – although these are, understandably, few and far between – a visit to *NeoRage*'s options menu enables players to choose their preferred flavour.

With emulators freely available for all four consoles, and ROM images not entirely difficult to locate, there are literally hundreds of once premium-price games available for download. But again, **Edge** must reiterate a point: in no way, shape or sense have these titles become 'freeware'. Downloading such games is, in effect, piracy – something **Edge** can hardly condone.

Like *MAME*, it's almost certain that the 16bit emu scene needs a hardy individual (or company) to attempt a pioneering 'pay per download' scheme, with a (modest) fee split


There are literally hundreds of once premium-price games available for download. But in no way, shape or sense have these titles become 'freeware'...

between the distributors and original copyright holders. Yet such an initiative requires a concerted effort on the part of the industry as a whole. If a number of software manufacturers choose to withhold their support, enthusiasts would turn, once more, to illicit sites for certain titles. It is, however, unlikely that Sega, Nintendo or SNK would regard the 'small change' on offer as worthy of their attention. In particular, Nintendo is unlikely lend its approval to such a venture.

And, while the concept of a 'pay per play' arrangement is sound in principle, another, entirely more *subjective* issue further reduces its potential. In short: halcyon time is relative. Many 16bit titles simply don't retain their appeal in the 32bit era, and the number of games offering what **Edge** would constitute as 'long term' appeal is remarkably small. The hardcore gaming veteran might insist that the SNES version of Konami's *International Superstar Soccer Deluxe*, rather than a native *FIFA* or *Actua*, is in effect the best football game available for the PC, yet the casual gamer is unlikely to be convinced.

There are those that argue that regulation would, in effect, 'kill' the emu market, yet **Edge** sees no other way forward for the scene. With PC processor speeds constantly increasing, emulation is fast becoming a popular replacement for console formats, joining the traditional death-knells that are market forces and the introduction of new technology. There are two PlayStation emus currently in development, one N64 project, and countless tales of Saturn programs. How long will it be before the likes of Sony or Nintendo target suppliers and programmers of emulation packages, arguing – perhaps justifiably – that such programs are no less illegal than copying devices such as the infamous Doctor 64 device, or a similar piece of hardware?

Once again, **Edge** welcomes suggestions and debate on how 16bit emulators, like *MAME*, can become legally acceptable. With 'working' versions of 32bit emus due within the next two years, should Sony, Nintendo and Sega accept the inevitable and take steps to legitimise emulation? It's a thorny issue. But, inevitably, the console technology of today is tomorrow's desktop toy…



NEO-GEO

Edge recommends:

NeoRAGE

Sound emulation: **No**

Joypad support: **Yes**

Multiplayer support: **Twoplayer**

Save game: **Yes**

Extra features: **Dip-switch settings, arcade/home version switch**

Worth a look: ***Puzzle Bobble, Super Sidekicks 2, Art of Fighting, Pulstar, Samurai Shodown***





Super Sidekicks 2

(Top) The famous Neo-Geo title screen, seen in arcades and homes across the world. (Above) A playable version of *Super Sidekicks 2* for *NeoRage*. It lacks pitch markings, but later versions should correct this oversight


Fatal Fury


Bust-A-Move

Neo-Geo emulation remains in its relative infancy. Yet the *NeoRage* project could well become the most complete emu available, in time…

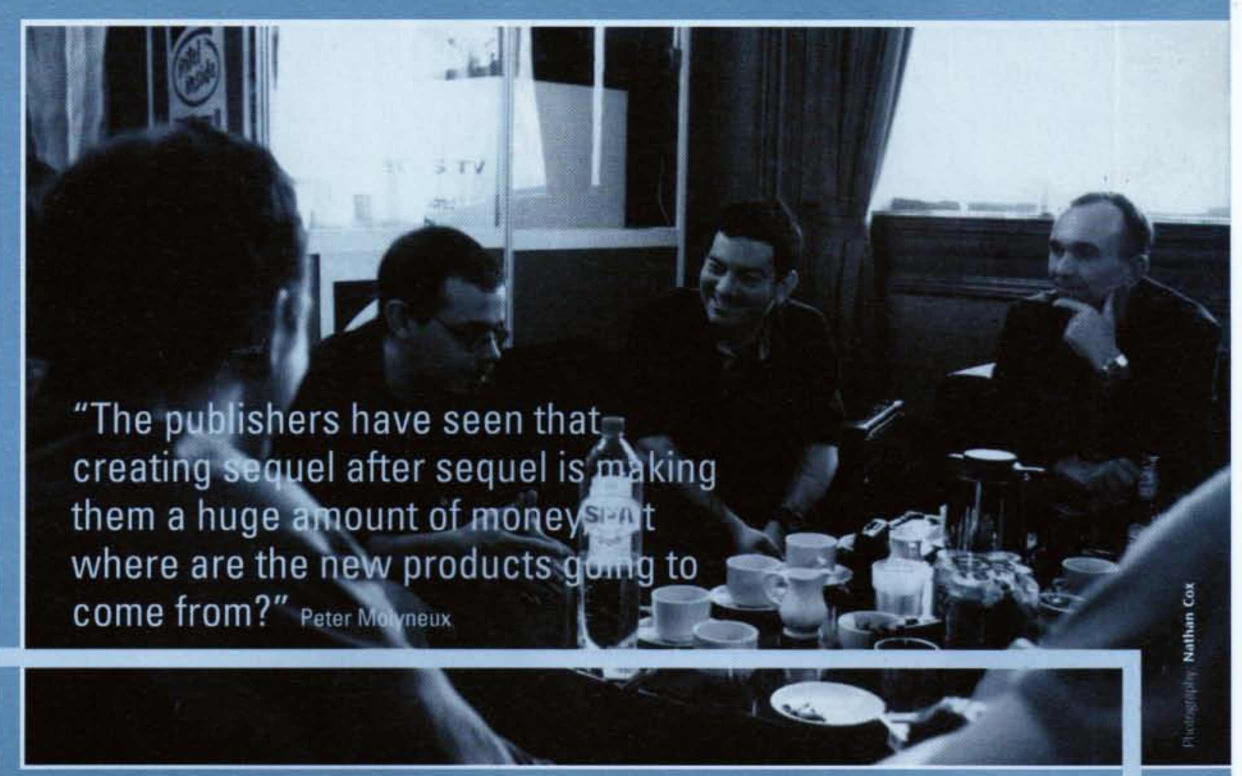
6 of the best

Away from the chaos of ECTS, six industry innovators assemble at **Edge**'s invitation...

London Olympia Exhibition Hall, September 1997. **Edge** gathers together six of the videogame industry's leading figures for a landmark discussion of what it is to make games today, and what the future holds. It's a resounding success.

Fast forward 12 months to this year's show, through a year of hardware announcements, a wallet-bursting number of triple-A sequels, multiple takeovers and a flood of fresh developers. Even for a fast-moving industry, things have been shifting at a frightening rate. And so the temptation to reform the group proved almost irresistible. Almost. Instead of the established faces of '97, **Edge** sought out some of those who are changing the way games are being made – with a couple of familiar faces thrown in for historical perspective.

After clearing a troublesome TV crew out of the way, **Edge** settled down with the chosen few. In attendance: Alex Garden, founder of Relic Software and creator of the highly anticipated *Homeworld*; Mike Diskette, ex-Bullfrog and co-founder of maverick studio *Mucky Foot*; Toby Gard of *Tomb Raider* fame, now co-running Confounding Factor in Bristol; Mike Wilson from the avant-garde publisher GoD; Jez San, the original Argonaut and *Star Fox* originator; and Peter Molyneux, creator of the first 'god' game, *Populous*, now striving to tread new turf with his latest opus, *Black and White*. Dictaphones whirring? Photographer ready? Then let the meeting of minds – part two – commence...





"The publishers have seen that creating sequel after sequel is making them a huge amount of money, but where are the new products going to come from?" Peter Molyneux

Photography: Nathan Cox

Edge: You're all people who do things very much your own way. What drives you to do it?

Alex Garden: Ego!

Peter Molyneux: It is an amazing, *amazing* feeling to walk into any shop in the world and see something you worked on. That has a lot to do with it, and also for me it's about the only thing that I am good at in the whole world, so it's pretty motivating to carry on and do something that you're good at.

Toby Gard: It's also that if there's a certain game that you really want to play, the only thing to do is to make it.

AG: You start off with this idea in your head, this spark of possibility, and it grows into this thing and you get more people involved and they add something to it. Then one day it grows into this bigger thing, until one day it just pops out and two million people are playing it.

Mike Diskette: How much of my life did I spend on *Syndicate Wars*! I gave 18 hours a day for two years. I was pushing the difficulty level a lot on that, it was down to me to choose how that game went. That's why everybody gets into it – the ability to have complete control over a game design and create the game you want to play.

Edge: With the obvious exception of Mike Wilson, none of you choose to self publish. It must be strange giving up control to a publisher after all the work that goes into what you do?

MD [to Mike Wilson]: Where's your suit?

Mike Wilson: Exactly.

AG: When I first started as just a developer, we used to work with publishing companies that really tried to control everything. But at least the ones we work with now are starting to realise that they don't make games, they just put the money into them – and get the money out.

MD: That comes down to your choice of publisher as well. That was one of our main concerns; we needed that freedom to do what we wanted to do. Some publishers we went to, they wanted to come down every week, they wanted to be involved in game design, they wanted to milestone the gameplay, to say what was going to be fun and what wasn't. We had options where we could get more money or more freedom. We chose the freedom.

Jez San: We've worked with good publishers and bad publishers and the difference is enormous, not just in the creative freedom when you develop the game but also in the way the game is marketed afterwards.

MW: The publisher thing has only been better for about the last year or two, they're starting to realise that they really should stay the hell out of it, or they're going to lose their talent.

AG: The PC has a lot to do with it, too. Now that it's so cheap to get a computer, it's almost swinging back to the old days. It's taken a curve of nearly eight years to go from three guys in a garage all the way up to these huge teams and back down to three guys again. It's fantastic.

JS: Do you know any three guys in a garage?

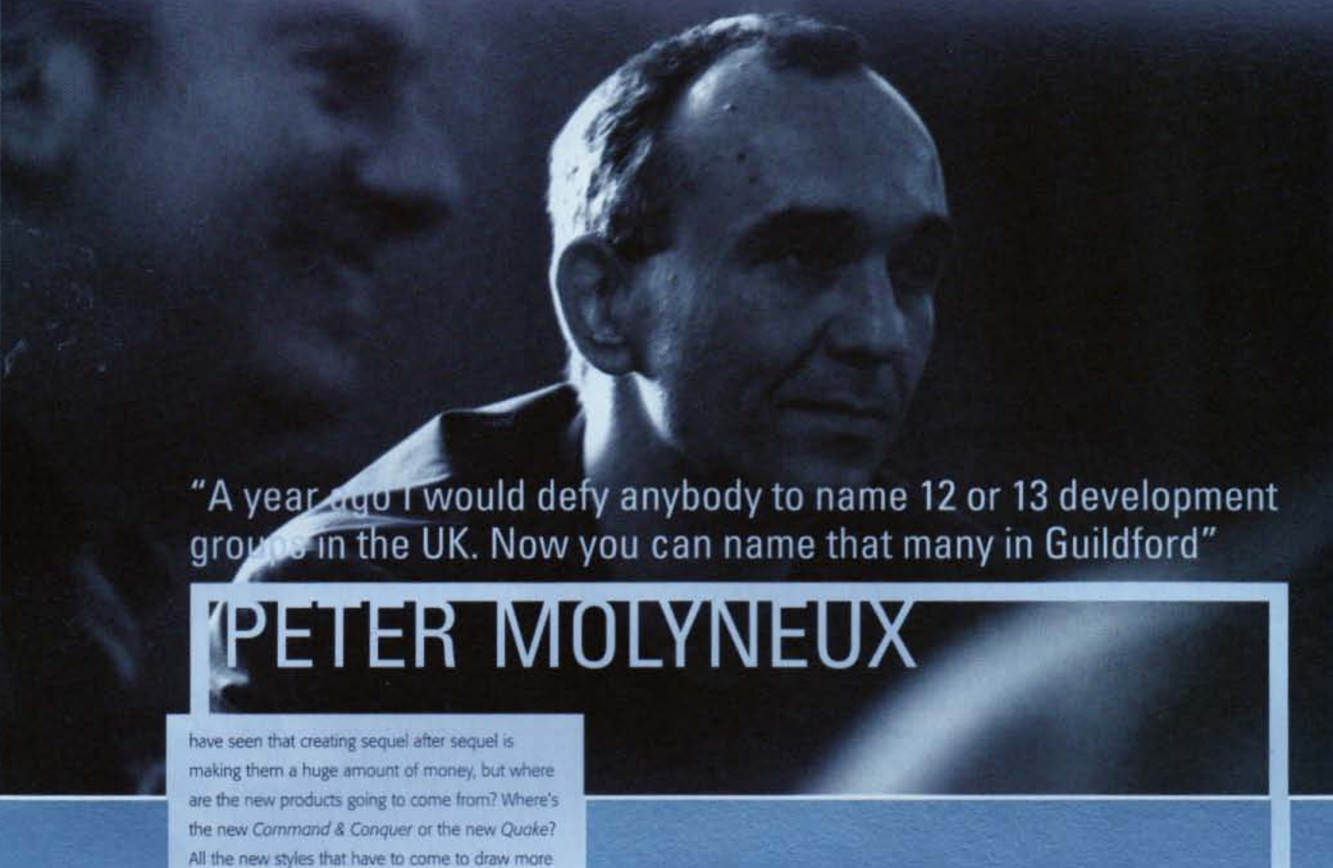
AG: Yes I do; there is a company in Sweden called Novastorm. Their game's got tons of potential.

MW: *Railroad Tycoon 2* was three guys until two months ago. Now it's five they're a bit over-staffed!

MD: Any team smaller than 20 is a 'small team' these days.

Edge: It seems game development is starting to match the music industry, with independent 'star' studios and large publishing groups which output what the 'stars' create.

PM: I think that what we are seeing is a huge change. A year ago I would defy anybody to name 12 or 13 development groups in the UK. Now you can name that many in Guildford. Obviously something has broken somewhere along the line for this to happen, this tidal wave of developers to happen, and it scares the shit out of me. That's because it's going to go full circle again, and a lot of those people are going to end up in trouble, because starting their own company, as everybody here has found, is hugely difficult and time consuming. The great thing about it is that all the creative moves that have to happen will come from those small development groups. The publishers



"A year ago I would defy anybody to name 12 or 13 development groups in the UK. Now you can name that many in Guildford"

PETER MOLYNEUX

have seen that creating sequel after sequel is making them a huge amount of money, but where are the new products going to come from? Where's the new *Command & Conquer* or the new *Quake*? All the new styles that have to come to draw more people into the industry; the small independent groups will do that.

AG: That's what's exciting about it, too. I still play games occasionally and I love it whenever you get a blip like this, it's the best, because as a gamer you know that within six months or a year, you are going to get something you've absolutely never seen before, and that is what keeps me coming back. Otherwise it just gets stale.

MW: But you guys were at E3 – how many of you can say that you saw something new?

PM: I don't think there is much new stuff coming along but you know there's going to be. At the next E3, or possibly the next ECTS, we're going to start seeing some new stuff from those independent groups. There is technology which the big studios aren't motivated to create. The fear of where the next meal comes from – or if you are going to survive – is the best motivator for creating a great product. You've got these huge studios filled with these people that work from nine to five, burning millions of dollars, and they are just there to create the next game, the next one in the series. There's always going to be a place for them, but we need the small developers to actually create the originals.

AG: Like EA Sports, they make the best sports games in the world, and they – arguably – get better and better every year. But it doesn't push anything, it's like turning out the new Ford Taurus.

Lifestyle choices

Edge: Going back to the nature of going independent, you talk about creative freedom, but looking at it cynically, how much can be attributed to personal financial gain?

JS: I think if we all wanted to be really wealthy we wouldn't be doing this. I think there are plenty of easier ways to make a living.

PM: Oh Jez! If it wasn't for software I'd be a poor man working in some office.

JS: Just look at our representation on the stock market; games companies are not as successful as many other businesses. We are mainly doing it to create good games, and if we can make a living then that's great.

MD: You're talking about the motivation for breaking away being financial, and in some respects you're right. Part of my motivation was I wanted to be on royalties, and working in-house you're not going to be on royalties. You don't want to be churning out more money for some huge corporation. That's why with our company we've given royalties to our employees, and that is one of the things we are very keen to do.

MW: No self-respecting developer is going to do this for a salary for very long.

JS: We pay royalties to every person in the company, and some of the teams that have had hits have done extremely well. Some of them have bought houses with their royalty cheques.

AG: I know people who have been slogging away and have done four or five games, and they are still waiting for that royalty cheque.

JS: They have got to choose the good developers then. If they are going to work for someone else they have got to choose someone who is going to reward them properly.

PM: Everybody here is in some way involved in small development houses, do you see studios being training grounds for future employees?

JS: I think it is inevitable that that happens. I mean from our own experiences, there have been people who have left us and started their own thing. Sometimes you can hang on to them for a few years, and then sometimes they get itchy feet and it's time to move on.

TG: I wonder whether that's harder from a smaller place, because there's always going to be someone in charge and it's not going to be left so much for a team to do their own thing.

PM: It's much more exciting in a smaller place – you see everything that is going on, you see everything to do with the game design, you get involved in every single area and it is just great

to see it all advancing. The press come round and they meet everybody.

AG: That counts a lot, too, because I think it's important that every person who works on that gets involved and is given recognition. The biggest advantage of working in a small studio is that you get to meet everyone and you're counted as one of the team.

JS: But there are advantages in having a larger development group as well. You get to play, you get to experiment, you have got the resources not only to be developing games that are for the current market, you can take a step back and think of what the next generation are going to be. Half of our company is in R&D and we develop games for sometimes one generation beyond where we can see, and we develop technologies that we can't even think of a use for yet, but we know they are going to be good.

MD: R&D shouldn't be about technology, it should be about innovating gameplay, new game concepts. Everyone is funding R&D and they are all going for technology, nobody just seems to be saying, 'Create new ideas'.

JS: The engine delivers the game, and so you quite often have to get the engine running first before you can even think about what kind of game you are going to do when you have got those capabilities at hand.

MD: You get the engine guys in and all they're interested in is the polygon count. The latest technology always seems to go into the stalest gameplay.

TG: It's better to design the engine for what you want to do.

Edge: Do you think it's true that publishers nowadays really only want 3D games? Is 2D gaming really dead?

AG: I don't think that 2D is dead, but publishers do.

JS: Anytime there's been a 2D game someone like Sony have said, 'We don't want any 2D games on our platform'. Like *Worms* a couple of years ago – *Worms* was a great game but Sony didn't want it on the PlayStation and then they gave in after a while.

PM: I think it's getting less of an issue since the 3D is getting so beautiful, and it's much less about these square things that vaguely look like people and is much more about environments that are real.

JS: Or abstract...

Edge: Even now sprites are being used to create successful games.

PM: Exactly. We're really anal in this industry about 3D, about our polygon counts and our framerates and what systems we are using. And suddenly something like *Commandos* comes along – and if you talk to a kid who has played it, they love it and they think the graphics are great, and they don't appreciate that it's just a sideways scrolling thing that I could program overnight. But that doesn't matter; it's cool because it looks beautiful and it's a good game. I think it's scary, with of all the technology that's going on – look at the 3D cards coming out.

AG: It's kind of liberating, too. I remember thinking a couple of years ago about what we're working on, and I was like, 'It can't be done, it's impossible,' and all of a sudden it could be done. I've got a couple of ideas in my head that right now are impossible, but in two years they won't be.

PM: I guess so. I think you start filling in more of the stuff in your head.

TG: The problem is that it takes away from the old days when you used to imagine it all, the old text-based adventure games. And the thing is, when we're making these games, we've got to be confident enough to be saying that what we've got in our head is better than what they've got in theirs. Which is a very arrogant thing.

JS: But publishers don't tend to believe that. You tell them a great idea and they will say, 'Well, we have seen lots of great ideas, now show us the game.' And then you have got to take a risk and do a certain amount of it and prove to them, and they've got to be able to play it before they get it.

MW: Unless you've proven yourself.

AG: And even then sometimes, if your idea is considered 'wacky' they're still going to be sceptical.

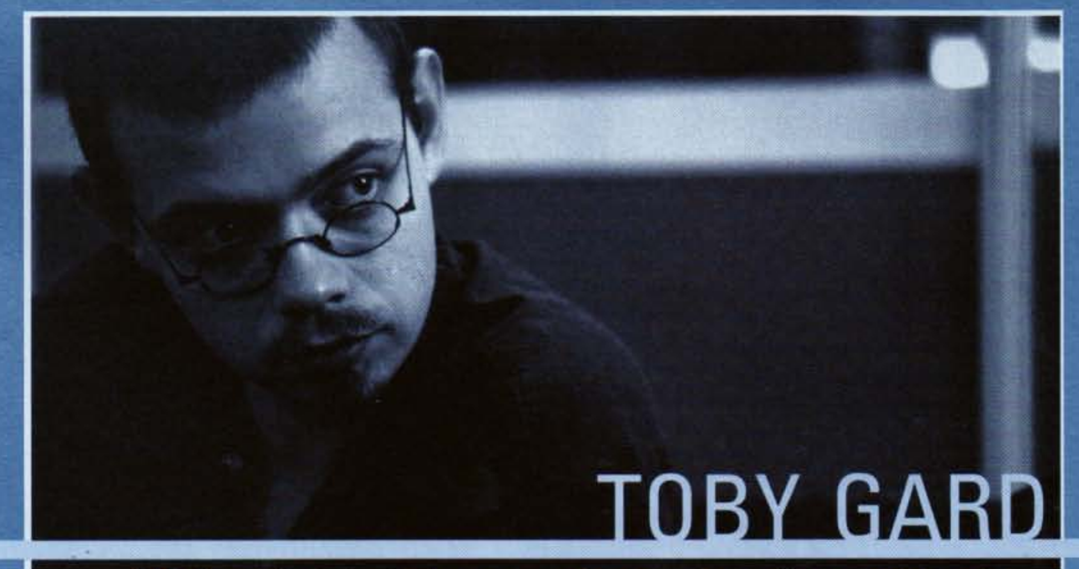
PM: Absolutely; it was true with *Black and White*. The first time I mentioned the idea to EA they didn't get it. I thought, 'Hmm, this is a bit worrying.'

Edge: That's pretty true of many of your games, though...

PM: Yeah, that is true.

MW: Most of the guys in these publishers that are making these evaluations, though, unless you can say, 'It's just like this...'

JS: Yeah, it's like *Quake* meets *Tomb Raider*...



TOBY GARD

"If there's a certain game that you really want to play, the only thing to do is to make it"

AG: ...and they go, 'Oh, okay.'

PM: But you can't blame the publishers for that. If someone comes up to you and shows you a game there's an irresistible urge to say, Well, what's it like?

AG: At the end of the day, I know it sounds terrible, and I know the publishers make a lot of money and all that stuff, but they are putting a couple of million dollars into a hole. They have no clue whether something's going to come out the other end. So if they ask for some justification at the beginning, I don't have to ask why.

PM: But that shouldn't go as far as saying, 'Make it more like this.'

AG: No, absolutely.

JS: The best experience we ever had working with a publisher was signing up a near-finished game, because we got to do it all ourselves and we got to make all the creative decisions and not have someone saying, 'Make him red instead of green' and stuff like that, stuff that was irrelevant.

MD: That's the luxury of having money in the bank!

Alternative reality

Edge: Touching back on the subject of 3D, it seems that game designers are striving hard to create these fantastical visions of alternate realities, when one of the reasons *GoldenEye* was so successful was its realism. There seems to be a real misdirection of energy.

MW: It's hard, because you get your level designers asking, Where's the ambition in that? Where's the talent in making a hallway? But people really do like that.

PM: But how does that fit in with the three-man teams we were talking about, when we have to worry about leaves floating around in the street?

JS: I can't imagine many games being done with a three-man team. I *can* imagine innovative new concepts being done with a three-man team. The smallest team we have now is 11 people, and typically they are much larger than that. Even if they start with three people, they end up being ten or 15 people by the end.

Edge: Looking around the show, it appears that everyone is reaching a similar technological plateau.

PM: I really think the games that we are seeing at the show right now, with very few notable exceptions, will look incredibly primitive compared to the games that will be coming out in two years. We really are on the edge of a revolution.

JS: But we've always been on the edge of revolution...

PM: That's true, but this time we are actually dealing with mechanics, real physics and real environments, and that is just scary.

AG: And that's all it takes, it is getting to that level where you can have the real physics and you don't have to worry about collision spaces anymore. And five million polygons! I'm never going to use that many! Well, within reason...

JS: Never say never. There's never enough memory and there are never enough polygons.

AG: But five million is a hell of a lot, you could do a lot with that, right? At some point it will become an issue of putting fuzz on faces.

JS: Even on the most powerful hardware that you can get today we're still limited. We still design games around what the platforms can do, we will never reach a point where the platform will do everything we want.

PM: How does gameplay fit into all of this? We just had a ten-minute conversation about leaves and fuzz on faces and we didn't mention gameplay at all.

JS: It's that ethereal, vapourous thing that you just can't nail down.

AG: It's fun. That's what it comes down to, that one word. If it's not fun it's crap.

MW: I played *Marble Madness* for two-and-a-half hours recently. That's gameplay – there were no leaves at all.

MD: It's that 'fun' element that causes slippage, though, you can't milestone fun into the design.

AG: But you don't because it's either fun the second you think of it, or it's not fun at all.

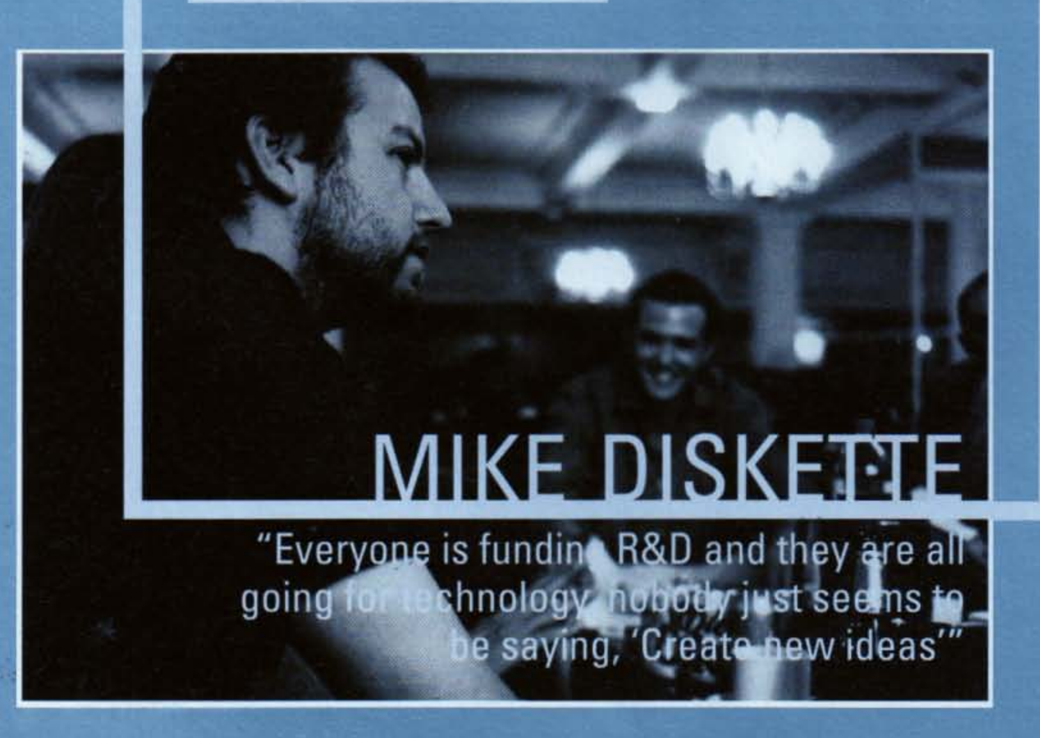
MD: That depends on the game, if you can't play it until it's finished. Imagine *C&C* with only two unit types.

AG: The idea was fun when they thought it up, though.

MD: Those are the games you've got trouble with, because you've got the idea, you take the idea to a publisher, they see it, the game's still not fun even a couple of months from the end.

Yoof culture

Edge: Expanding on the subject of fun, everyone's talking about appealing to mature gamers, but what about the kids who we used to be, what are they playing?



MIKE DISKETTE

"Everyone is funding R&D and they are all going for technology, nobody just seems to be saying, 'Create new ideas'"

ALEX GARDEN



"But sex and violence are really easy to portray. Try the subtle interaction of adults over a dinner conversation, it's almost impossible to get"

JS: We aim for the kids.

TG: We're all kids!

PM: We've always been gamers making games for gamers, and we're all getting old now – some of us older than others, unfortunately – and so are the games. But you're right, there doesn't seem to be the same talk about kids of eight playing games, they're playing *Resident Evil 2* and things…

JS: We don't tend to aim for games for the mature audience – although we are doing one, *Kanaan* – most of our games are for the young. *Croc* was designed for the ten-year-olds, and we sold loads and loads of *Croc* to young gamers. Now we are doing violent, older games as well, but we do like the young market. We came from the Nintendo world originally and we like to pitch our games more for the family.

MD: I don't think many reviewers understand that, because they review a game very poorly and really it would be spot on for a younger audience.

JS: Yeah, *Croc*'s a great case in point. It sold very well and it sold to the exact audience we intended, but most of the magazines didn't get it. We went for the young market, which Sony's now noticed a year after and has a slew of new releases for that market.

MW: We just shipped *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* in the States – obviously a kid's game – and *Next Generation* beat the hell out of it. That reviewer hasn't played a kid's game in ten years!

Edge: Tying together the subjects of kids' games and realism, does anyone find it disturbing that *GoldenEye* is selling so well on the N64, a machine that is popularly perceived to be a child's toy?

MW: But those kids are getting older. Nintendo's target age now I think is 18, which is four years older than it was about four years ago. It's the same people that have been playing it.

JEZ SAN



"*Croc* sold very well and it sold to the exact audience we intended, but most of the magazines didn't get it"

TG: I am really disturbed by some of the recent games that have been about in firstperson. They seem to be getting very realistic, and I know that it is for a mature gamer so fair enough, but do we really want to re-enact the life of a psycho?

AG: Do you think that as the games we make are getting more and more realistic, and we're having someone rip a leg off and beat someone to death with it, do you really think that when an 11-year-old kid gets a sniper rifle and goes and sits in a tree and shoots at school mates, we are doing that?

PM: There were always kids like that. Look at Jesse James – he was 12 and he shot the shit out of 20 people, and he didn't have a computer game. Just because a kid rips someones leg off on a computer game doesn't mean he wants to go and do it to his brother.

MD: There is this perception that the fact that it is interactive makes it somehow more influential.

AG: If you watch somebody killed on TV, you watch somebody killed on TV, but if you go and kill someone, I think the argument is that you chose to do it, you chose to shoot that person…

JS: We're training kids to be axe murderers!

Edge: Why is it that 'mature' has to equate to 'violent' in terms of game design?

MW: Because we can't do sex well yet…

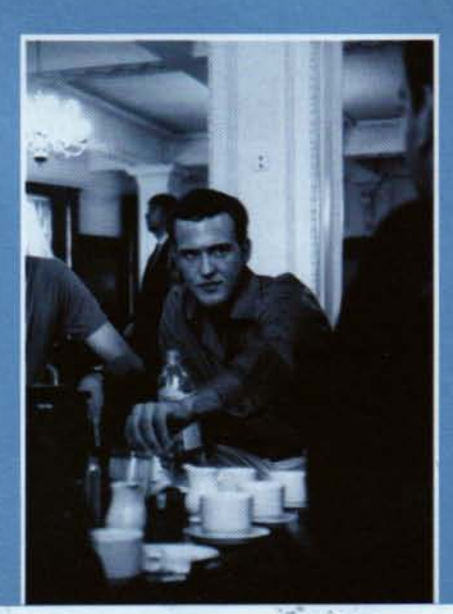
PM: You can't do sex in an American game at all – Americans are so prudish it's unbelievable.

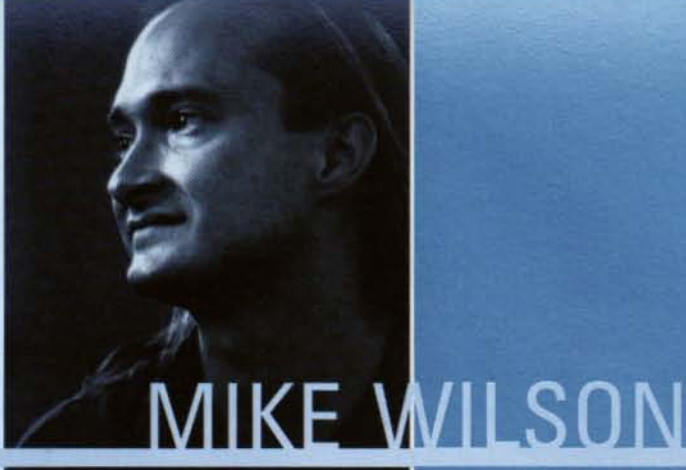
AG: Look at *Grand Theft Auto*, banned everywhere, but that was a fun game to play. You machine gun police – in the States this is actually a problem!

PM: And so they thought banning *GTA* would solve the crime rate? We are still yet to discover sex in computer games, other than *Tomb Raider* that Toby did, sex hasn't been done at all.

Edge: It's not just about sex and violence, is it? There are elements of emotion that could be introduced, to enhance the immersive experience.

AG: But sex and violence are really easy to portray. Try the subtle interaction of adults over a dinner conversation, it's almost impossible to get.
TG: Some of it is being done slightly wrong, where it's trying to go towards more and more realism. I don't think that's ever completely achievable. It's a lot like cartoons – caricature is actually what you need if you want to make a strong cartoon.
PM: It's going to be so interesting when the 3D stuff really takes off, because then we will have the environments to actually show the emotions. At the moment all the characters we do don't have a face, they just have this flat thing, which isn't showing any emotions at all.
TG: We have faces in our new game.
PM: Really?
Edge: Taking it to an extreme, will we ever see a game that makes the player cry?
PM: *Final Fantasy VII* made people cry.
JS: Yeah, many RPGs have emotional responses.
AG: I remember playing a text-based game when I was a kid where you have a robot sidekick which sacrifices himself to save you. I totally wept.
PM: I wonder if you'd have felt the same emotion if it had been visual? I don't think so. Text adventures are the best interactive movies.
AG: They're so much fun!
PM: They're a real bore to type, though.
Edge: So what do you need to do to start triggering these emotions in gameplayers?
MW: You have to have characters that you care about, that aren't disposable and that respond.
PM: How many films have you seen recently with characters that you really care about? These are scriptwriters that have been doing this for years, and now we have another expertise that we have to put in. I'm looking forward to doing it but it does scare the hell out of me. It is not just a twitch of an eyebrow or the widening of the eyes, it is a lot more than that if we are talking about real emotions.
MW: A lot of things that make you care about the character aren't very fun to play.
AG: When learning to care about a person you don't do it in 40 hours of gameplay, you do it in the time you spend with the person plus the time you have away from them to reflect on them as well.





MIKE WILSON

"A lot of things that make you care about the character aren't very fun to play"

PM: I have to say we are actually talking about *Black and White* here, but I don't want to. You can wipe that off the tape if you like...
MW: 'Coming soon from Lionhead!' [laughter]

What's the story

Edge: We're talking about building a character, but it does go back to the text adventure thing, it's about storytelling. That was *Final Fantasy VII*'s real strength.
PM: That's it. You played it for 30 torturous hours and then one of the main characters popped her clogs and it was bad.
AG: In *Final Fantasy* you meet somebody and talk to them and you then leave them and you have time to reflect, and then you come back to them. And I think really it is the time in between that really does it. And in a game when you deal with a character constantly, shooting, jumping, running, you don't necessarily have a chance to do that, you can't grow with that character.
JS: Let's not get carried away here. Games aren't all heading into emotional depth and stuff like that. There are equally good games that have no story, or no back story, or no characters you need to actually have an affinity with. We're talking a certain category of game here that emotional development and storytelling is a part of, but equally there is a huge market in games that don't need a story.
AG: Chris Crawford said something interesting: in the games industry, if we sell a million copies we run around saying we're happy, we made a lot of money. And the other six million people who have computers in the US alone didn't buy one. So why are you so happy, you hit one sixth of your market? We need to start making games that the general person can identify with.
MW: Like *Deer Hunter*?
PM: What is the most played game in the world?
JS: *Solitaire* – you get it free with every computer. Or how about *Minesweeper*, the second most played game?
PM: How many people do you think would enjoy a game if you could sit them down and strap them to a computer and teach them how to play? The games we're making at the moment just aren't appealing to the right people. In a lot of ways it's because they're too sophisticated. The generation that we are making games for, unless they are dedicated gamers, are the generation that watches MTV and surfs through channels and has an attention span of that much, and a lot of games we make just don't cut it.
JS: I agree. I think we have to realise that as much as we've all said we love writing games we would love to play, we are not the massmarket.
MW: But start looking at the massmarket; that's where *Deer Hunter* comes from, where the Spice Girls come from. Do you want to make Spice Girl music?
JS: I think *Tetris* has proved that you can do games that become universally appealing.
PM: There's one game round this table that one of us did that really broke the boundaries, and that was *Tomb Raider*.
JS: But even then only three million people bought it – which is a huge amount of people,

but it's still a fraction of the total market. We all hate *Myst*, I'm sure.

AG: But's that's funny, because the other four million people didn't.

Edge: Do you think that this huge, untapped PC market needs to be treated to some classic, clichéd console gameplay?

MW: But what developer wants to dumb their game down to appeal that audience?

MD: It's difficult to find the motivation to make a game that your mum's going to want.

JS: It's also a platform thing. There is no ubiquity of platforms, the PC market is constantly moving, the consoles are cyclic, and until there's a universal platform you can aim at, like there is in the CD and VHS-player markets, you just don't have a target to aim for.

AG: But if you're making music, all the CD is, is a transfer mechanism. The quality of the music on the CD doesn't depend on the delivery mechanism, whereas in our case it does.

JS: Let's be fair for a second, we all love high-end platforms, we love them because we are excited about technology, but we don't need platforms. If there was a hundred million standardised platforms out there we could develop great games on those platforms.

Edge: Surely if everyone was writing for the Wintel platform and aimed for a P100 not a P400, it would be that ubiquitous platform? It's also something that Project X aims to offer.

JS: I don't know about Project X. It's a bit of interactivity on a DVD player. If they suddenly become a dominant DVD platform, then there's an opportunity for us all. But if they want it to be viewed as an interactive platform, then it's competing with people who are dedicating much more hardware to interactivity.

AG: It's neat though, because they're not talking about polygons.

JS: Having a lot of CPU power is difficult if it's fragmented.

PM: I bet we are going to end up with some very simple games, which will be really interesting. Because it is a DVD player people might play it that have never played games before.

Edge: What you're ultimately saying is that you want to break into the massmarket.

PM: We have to stop making these insanely complicated games – or make it so that the games are insanely complicated when people want them to be. I bet that if you could persuade anyone who would never think of playing to sit down and play *Quake*, they would love it. If you could further sit them down and get them through all the rubbish and icons of *Command & Conquer* they would love that, too. And so that is the only major barrier that we really have, and true we don't want to dumb down our games to make them like this playschool-like approach, but…

AG: What if we just had a much simpler control mechanism? I know this is totally cliché, but what if we just had a big helmet with an infinite resolution that was totally crisp, where everybody could use their hands. I mean you could make some pretty complicated things – just walking in the street is pretty complicated. You could make some pretty complicated games where people could pick things up and put them in their backpacks.

MD: That's when we become massmarket, in 50 years' time there is no Hollywood, there is no interactivity, they're one and the same thing.

AG: Games are complicated because you want them to do more than just 'push the button'.

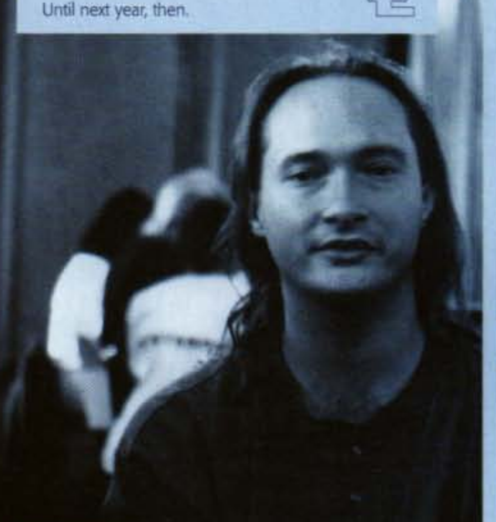
PM: The interesting thing that Philips did was to produce a joypad for the home which was this massive great thing with three huge buttons on. And that didn't work. One thing I would love more than anything else, is speech recognition. If you could actually talk to a gamer, speak to a gamer, communicate to a gamer.

AG: Tons of people send me emails going, 'Hey have you thought about putting voice recognition in your games?' and I went 'No', because I need all the CPU to render all the graphics.

PM: Well, even if you had all the CPU it still wouldn't be enough. No one has done it, no one has cracked it.

MD: Have you seen Saturday morning TV shows where you phone in and you control the character? There are people on the end of the phone and someone in the studio with a joystick controlling the character, doing the moves… it's just too slow.

Until next year, then.



"I don't know about Project X… If they want it to be viewed as an interactive platform, then it's competing with people who are dedicating much more hardware to interactivity." Jez

TESTSCREEN

The definitive monthly assessment of the world's latest videogames

Get real

Realism: a seemingly harmless word which must cause countless headaches within the developing community. As rapidly evolving graphics technology has allowed visuals to become more detailed – and hence better emulators of the real world – gamers have expected the structure of titles to match these aesthetic advancements.

Would *GoldenEye* have been as immersive had it featured fantastical alien landscapes instead of believable, realistic environments players could relate to and interact with? What if you weren't able to shoot guards through windows, or take them out with a carefully aimed bullet as they stood ready to hurl a grenade in your direction? The result would be a game of only half the value.

It's an aspect that is emerging in all areas of videogaming. The key word in racing games these days is also reality. *Gran Turismo* may have delivered sim-like aspects to the console-owning masses but by that time Codemasters' *TOCA Touring Car Championship* had already been selling astonishingly well (given its highly technical, very specialised nature), and at the time of writing currently tops the charts in its Dual Shock-compatible Platinum format. Furthermore, the recent *Colin McRae Rally* continues the trend to recreate the behaviour of a real vehicle via a joypad.

But creating a realistic game requires more than an advanced physics model. Anyone with a doctorate in physics and a degree in programming should, in time, be able to do that. They'd probably end up with a very competent driving sim, but even the world's most advanced simulator fails to be more exciting than the average motorway drive. The trick is to implement such a model seamlessly into the game's overall structure to maximise its gameplay potential. This is what *Grand Prix Legends* (see p82) manages to do so well. And this is where no amount of university education can help, because there are no gameplay courses available to the budding student. Gameplay is not a definable science, it can't really be pinned down or transcribed into a textbook. It just is.

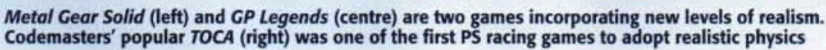
In *Metal Gear Solid* there are countless occasions where you can be stood facing a guard who, in real life, would spot you in an instant – but, because of artificially restricted perception, he remains unaware of your presence. This is a necessary compromise between reality and playability. How infuriating would *MGS* be if the terrorists boasted 'real' senses? Snake would be dead the moment he stuck his nose around a corner.

It's a delicate balance that, until new methods of controlling your onscreen counterpart emerge, is likely to keep developers reaching for the paracetamol.









***Metal Gear Solid* (left) and *GP Legends* (centre) are two games incorporating new levels of realism. Codemasters' popular *TOCA* (right) was one of the first PS racing games to adopt realistic physics**

Index

Videogames on the Edge

This month's schedule-disrupting quartet...



Grand Prix Legends (Sierra)

Despite tremendous effort, **Edge** still has some way to go before memorising the dreaded Nürburgring track. One lap without a crash is difficult enough.



Metal Gear Solid (Konami)

A carefully placed C4 charge, a remotely guided missile or a simple throw into a lava pit. So many ways to dispose of enemy soldiers, so little time...



1943 (Capcom)

Arguably the best of the trio offered by Capcom's first retro collection, *1943* is as playable now as the day it first landed in the world's arcades.



Sega Rally 2 (Sega)

Soon to hit Dreamcast, Sega's coin-op sequel to one of the most enjoyable rally games ever continues to impress with its highly technical nature.

METAL GEAR SOLID







Given the extreme amount of dialogue, players would be best advised to pass this Japanese release by and wait for the US version on October 21





Given a telescopic lens' set magnification, the sniper rifle's zoom level cannot be altered. It's another realistic touch and a great addition to a superb weapon range



MGS's use of a high-angled camera (top) reflects Konami's understanding of playability and is reminiscent of the original 8bit *Metal Gear* games

For such a high-profile game, *Metal Gear Solid* is initially disappointing, its slow pacing imparting a distinct sense of disillusionment. Yet soon enough you realise that this is Konami's way of easing you into what is a very different game to what's currently available on Sony's machine or indeed any other platform. Ignore what the Japanese packaging states – *MGS* is certainly not an action game. Anyone adapting that sort of strategy is unlikely to get past the initial credits without losing a life or two.

The plot runs thus: As Solid Snake, your mission is to infiltrate a 21st century Alaskan nuclear weapon depot (currently besieged by the infamous FOXHOUND terrorist organisation) and regain control of the situation. Once a government-controlled outfit (which counted Snake as one of its members) engaged in highly delicate covert operations, FOXHOUND now comprises bitter, mentally unstable individuals who have undergone substantial alterations to their basic genetic code as a result of top-secret government-instigated experiments.

Naturally, all are encountered at various points during the mission and they all possess differing attributes, therefore requiring a different approach in order to dispose of them.

There are good guys, too, of course. Throughout the entire game, Snake can count on the support of numerous characters via radio communication who provide vital information during important confrontations. And at several significant points during his mission, certain individuals offer assistance which, depending on the situation, can be anything from plot revelations to artillery backup.

MGS does not like to be rushed. It is a very specifically paced title and arcade heads are likely to find its unusual tempo



Overall detail level is inspired – note the console next to the PC (above)

On one level, the guards use the toilet with alarming frequency (above); some wash their hands, some don't. And yes, the hand dryer is functional

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Konami**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **¥5,800 (£25)**

Release: **Out now (Japan)**







Keep an eye out for wall sections that can be destroyed using C4 explosive. The square button sets the charge; once in place, stand back and press circle

a little unsettling at first. Ideally, every move is planned in advance, every potential passageway investigated, the guards' patrols studied and security cameras located for any opportunity that allows progression without potential detection. Should detection occur, Snake must evade the enemy's limited perceptive range for a specified amount of time before things return to normal. Thankfully, the majority of locations allow plenty of hiding opportunities, and so long as Snake remains quiet (guards are also alerted by unusual sounds and are therefore likely to investigate their origin), after a tense, seemingly interminable wait it's relatively safe for Snake to continue his quest. If, however, hiding is not an option, then guards can be gunned down, used as punch bags or, more interestingly, as human shields against their colleagues' bullets.

The game's unhurried nature is further reflected in the numerous cut-scenes. These feature some incredibly cinematic sequences with multiple camera angles, motion blur and other effects, and reveal major plot developments. They are also some of the longest examples yet seen in a videogame – over ten minutes' worth is not uncommon – and explain the necessity of the game's two-CD format.

Considering their quality, the graphics are also likely to occupy a substantial chunk of the available storage data. Other games may boast visuals of higher resolution but few can claim to display as believable an environment as *MGS* manages to convey so successfully. It's all in the detail – the soldiers, for example, sport different yet realistic uniforms depending on their role, from the simplistic, blueish/grey appearance of the light infantrymen to the understandably thicker, baggier, mint-green look of the arctic warfare troops. Elsewhere, a *Policenauts* (one of the earlier games from Hideo Kojima, *MGS*'s director and producer) poster – complete with the Konami logo – adorns the wall of a control room and a PlayStation-like console (including infra-red joypad) sits next to a computer and its widescreen monitor. Toilets used by the occupying soldiers are littered with cigarette ends while those in the prison cells reflect their dubious hygienic status by having maggots happily crawling all over the enclosure's floor.

It is odd, then, that Konami should choose to erode some of the realism it's



Although used here for dramatic effect, thermal goggles (main) prove crucial during certain sections, as do their night vision equivalent (inset)







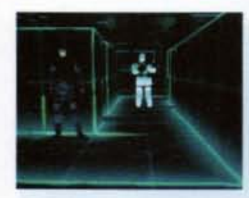
In practice, many situations benefit from prior assessment using the scope's powerful zoom capabilities. The ability to freely switch to a firstperson view is equally remarkable







Just when you think you've seen everything, *MGS* introduces a new gameplay aspect such as the repeated use of the circle button if Snake is to survive an unhealthy dose of shock therapy (above). Some bosses use telekinesis (top left), while elsewhere maggots feast on a corpse (left)



Even the training mode is good. After beating the ten levels once, the time attack and gun shooting modes follow

worked so hard to create by representing weapons and ammo as floating, rotating boxes. A more important failure in this department, though, concerns enemies: you may have painstakingly crept up to soldiers, grabbed and dragged them away to a secluded corner in order to quietly snap their neck, and yet they regenerate once Snake returns to a room, shattering some of the real-world illusion. But while some of the game's other aspects are also unrealistic, **Edge** understands the need for things like artificially reducing the soldiers' perceptive range in order to retain maximum playability (see Testscreen Intro, p77).

MGS is all about atmosphere and Konami's masterpiece is as sonically accomplished as it is graphically. As the game's nature allows little chance of rushing things there is a sense of perpetual tension present in the proceedings and it is excellently complemented by one of the most atmospheric musical scores ever heard in a videogame. From the simplistic yet evocative melody at the start of the game to the fast-paced themes during the action sequences, the music accompanies the onscreen developments with impressive competence. Even a Fleetwood Mac-esque track somehow fits in perfectly.

Ultimately, *Metal Gear Solid* rewards players in a way only a pitiful number of games do. Just when you think there's nothing else that it can do to surprise you, along comes a situation that requires a new use for a weapon, or an alternative application of a familiar button. Until the game is finished, its gameplay elements continually threaten to change, offering players new challenges to deal with.

While it lasts, then, this is one of the most compelling and satisfying experiences PlayStation owners are ever likely to experience.

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten

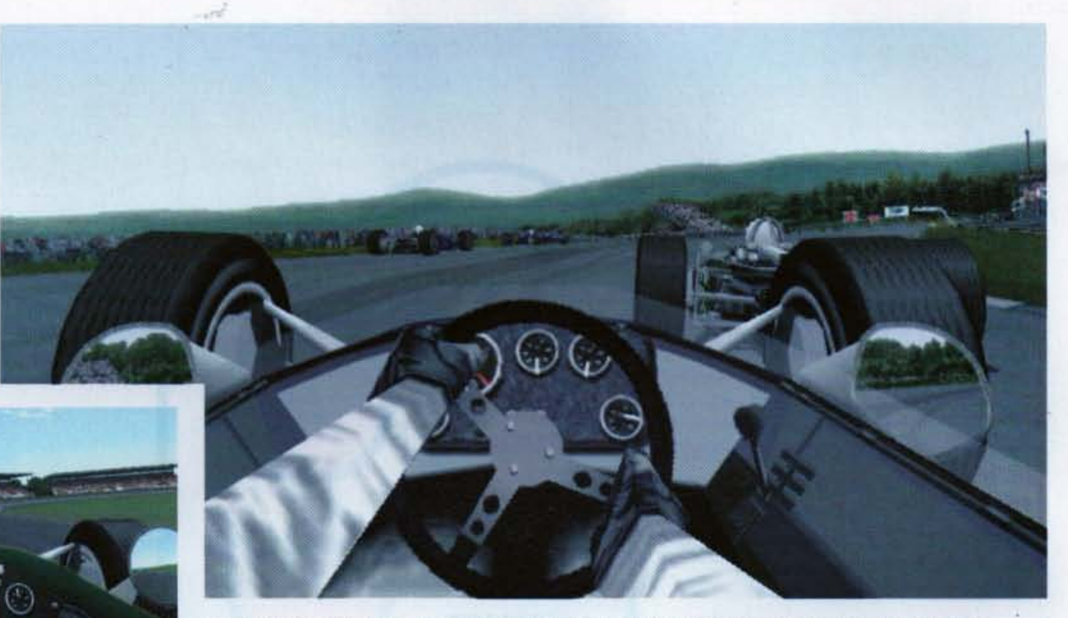


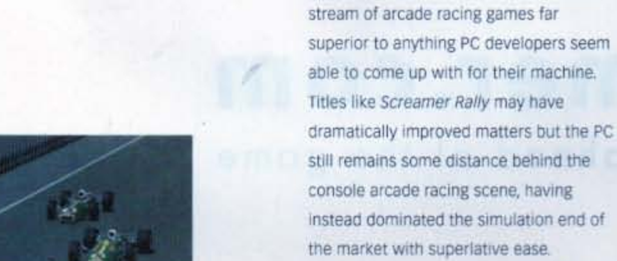
Confronting Vulcan Raven (above) is a genuinely stressful experience. Cut-scenes are wonderfully filmic (right)

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS









Papyrus' game captures the essence of the sport during the 1960s in a manner that should prove irresistable for F1 fans. Everything is recreated with realism and playability in mind

Since its European release, the PlayStation has had a consistent stream of arcade racing games far superior to anything PC developers seem able to come up with for their machine. Titles like *Screamer Rally* may have dramatically improved matters but the PC still remains some distance behind the console arcade racing scene, having instead dominated the simulation end of the market with superlative ease.

Then came *Gran Turismo*, the finest – and most playable – blend of arcade and simulation yet seen in a motor racing title. While PlayStation owners have (understandably) run around excitedly shouting '*GT*' in the general direction of PC owners, the latter have remained imperturbable, calmly pointing out the existence of 1995's *Grand Prix 2*. A full-fledged sim maybe, but one of the most engaging examples of its genre yet.

And now, having overtaken countless contenders, Papyrus' delayed effort is finally lining up alongside Geoff Crammond's finest at the front of the grid, with a superb recreation of what is arguably regarded as F1's finest era: 1967. A time when the sport was uncluttered by corporate sponsorship, drone-like drivers, a safety-obsessed governing body and – perhaps more importantly – downforce.

This should be the first thing the majority of F1 sim fans will notice. Turn off the driving aids – they interfere with the realism. Go into a corner at the speeds allowed by today's 700bhp winged machines and with luck you'll oversteer, giving you the illusion that enough opposite lock should bring the back end into line. This is, of course, nonsense. Chances are that by the time you notice it, you'll be heading gearbox first into the nearest fence.

But rather than oversteer, the majority of *GPL* virgins should encounter the rather more troublesome aspect of understeer. Without a front wing forcing the front tyres into the tarmac, the car heads for the nearest barrier. To brake now could be fatal, you have to hit the brakes on the straight *before* the turn.

In fact, braking is another problem altogether. By today's standards, applying the velocity reducers in a 1967 F1 car does little in terms of affecting its overall speed. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that *GP Legends* requires modern braking distances to be tripled, unless you want to meet Mr Understeer halfway round the corner and rip off a front wheel.

This is not to suggest that in 1967 F1 races were held near the local arboretum, rather the circuits were a little different. Unlike the ever-growing, near phobia-indicative, list of safety features that must be met by all of the 16 tracks constituting today's F1 season, race circuits in the '60s constituted a smooth strip of tarmac with a narrow grass verge either side of it, lined by trees or a risible fence, incapable of holding back an angry squirrel, let alone a car approaching sideways on, wheels locked, at 160mph. Long open turns featured prominently, usually taken flat out, and chicanes were pronounced 'chickens' after the few drivers who favoured them. But the circuits then all had one thing in common: they were exceptional fun while being extraordinarily demanding.

The Nürburgring is a case in point: 14.189 miles and 174 different bends.



Naturally, all of the cars from the 1967 season are perfectly recreated – expect legendary cars such as Jim Clark and Graham Hill's Lotus-Ford 49 (top) as well as the Ferrari 312 (centre)

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Sierra**

Developer: **Papyrus**

Price: **£35**

Release: **Out now**



You'd be surprised how easy it is to spin (above) once realistic damage is on – the slightest rubbing of wheels with another car could end in retirement

That's just one lap. Racing legend has it that no driver has ever memorised the entire course. Whether true or not, driving the full 1967 German Grand Prix is one of the most exhausting videogame experiences you are ever likely to face.

With only 15 turns and 1.954 miles of tarmac the Monaco track may seem comparatively simple but is second to the Nürburgring as the most treacherous circuit of the 11 on offer. Supreme concentration is needed to survive 100 laps.

GPL manages to capture all of the above with phenomenal aplomb. It features one of the most comprehensive physics engines yet seen in a racing game with a setup facility to match. If you know what you're doing, then feel free to adjust (among others) the level of toe-in, roll bar stiffness, static ride height, brake balance, steering ratio and tyre pressure to suit your driving style.

In time, powersliding round some of the more open turns becomes a controlled manoeuvre and a higher difficulty level may be advisable. Winning races at the highest setting, however, considering the advanced AI displayed by the CPU-controlled drivers and realistic damage, is a tough, but compulsive affair. Winning the championship is beyond mere mortals.

Visually, the game features superbly reproduced tracks and sumptuous scenery. More impressive still are the cars, displaying the same attention to intricate detail evident throughout the rest of the game. Naturally, this extends to the aural side of the proceedings. Each of the vehicles has its own particular roar but few things in life sound as impressive as the Ferrari 312's V12 screaming as its 410bhp propels you down one of Monza's long straights. Understandably, the louder the speakers, the better the effect.

Grand Prix Legends is a game offering a formidable challenge, and as such is unlikely to convert arcade racing fans. It manages to mix terrific visuals with astoundingly realistic dynamics, resulting in one of the most rewarding car-related PC experiences ever. If you own a steering wheel add-on, that is.

The result is pure videogaming elegance.



The more outrageous crashes can even be saved as replays







***Grand Prix Legends'* replay options are fairly comprehensive, and allow you to view races from a couple of TV-like angles as well as from any of the other cars**





Sadly, CPU players appear not to need to move their arm when changing gear

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten

PARASITE EVE

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Square/EA**

Developer: **SquareSoft**

Price: **$40 (£25)**

Release: **Out now (US)**



***Parasite Eve*'s stunning looks and high production values should ensure that it wins many fans, but apart from its intriguing battles, those expecting *Resident Evil*-style thrills will find the pace far too slow and uneventful**









Although *Resident Evil* fans may well be comfortable with *Eve*'s similar settings and gameplay, Edge is not. Parasite Evil, anyone?

Although Square likes to dub *Parasite Eve* – its first Japan/US co-production – a cinematic RPG, to most eyes the term 'survival, horror role playing' would seem far more apt. With its contemporary police-versus-monsters setting and polygon characters set on rendered backdrops you could accuse the company of plagiarism, such are the likenesses to *Resident Evil*. Even down to the 'realistic' save points (here the typewriters are replaced by phones) and limited inventory – forcing you to store surplus items in convenient chests – the two games, initially, both look and play in a surprisingly similar fashion.

However, Square has far loftier aspirations for *Parasite Eve* than a simple videogame version of 'Day of the Dead'. Based on a popular Japanese novel it attempts to infuse its tale of a malevolent being able to manipulate and mutate the cells of living organisms, with proper characters, plot, and movie-like pacing. The action of battling mutant dogs and rats is interspersed with plenty of exploration and conversation as the game's rookie cop heroine (and only person whose cells are immune to the mutation) – Aya Brea – slowly realises how her history and fate are intertwined with that of the cell-altering Eve.

It's a laudable idea and one that Square has been slowly moving towards for some time now. Alas, in *Parasite Eve*'s case, the term 'cinematic' seems to only apply to the visual aesthetic. While no opportunity has been spared in lavishing the game with plenty of glossy FMV sequences and atmospheric depictions of a wintery New York (courtesy of the company's new Hawaii-based graphics facility), scant attention seems to have been paid to either the script or soundtrack. The voice actors in *Resident Evil* may have been some of the worst ever committed to CD, but the stony silence that punctuates the dry, onscreen text conversations here simply cripples any atmosphere the game might have had. Likewise, bar some eerie operatic wailing, the musical accompaniment often seems completely at odds with the onscreen action.

Where the game really does prove its worth is in its combat: an ingenious system that neatly straddles both the turn-based and action camps. Although derived from the usual *Final Fantasy*-style Active Time Battle, where attacks can only be made once a character's AT gauge has filled, *Parasite Eve*'s battles are far more interactive. Although still random, combat no longer switches to a separate screen and both Aya and her opponents have complete freedom to move anywhere within the combat area. As well as allowing the player the chance to dodge enemy attacks the game rewards tactical combat with greater damage being inflicted the nearer to the target you can get.

Despite its graphical grandeur, however, old hands looking for the sort of unexpected story twists and high drama of Square RPGs gone by will only end up sorely disappointed by a predictable and lacklustre tale.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten

SPYRO THE DRAGON



Spyro is visually impressive and a good technical example of a third-gen PlayStation title. Yet it lacks excitement – there's little evidence of the anticipation felt when entering a new world in *Banjo* or *Mario*, for example



Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **SCEE**

Developer: **Insomniac Games**

Price: **£35**

Release: **Out now**

Children will love *Spyro the Dragon*. This is a good thing because Insomniac's title has seemingly been developed solely for them. There's nothing wrong with this, of course, but it does serve as yet another reminder of *Super Mario 64's* supremacy in the way it bridges all age barriers, unrivalled in the field despite a strong challenge from Rare's *Banjo-Kazooie*. But despite its vibrantly coloured world and entertaining nature, *Spyro's* shallower gameplay prevents it from making the same claim.

Ironically, this is due to Spyro himself. As a young, four-legged dragon entrusted with the task of freeing his elders (some of whom sound particularly camp) from a potential future as a collection of stone statues, Spyro must collect gems and battle Gnorc's evil minions residing within the game's six worlds (each subdivided into six levels) before facing the steroid-enhanced villain himself. Insomniac may have created a likeable character, but making him a four-legged creature has seriously limited Spyro's repertoire of moves. Whereas a biped can grab enemies, pull objects, climb poles and hold on to ledges, Insomniac's dragon can only run (which doubles as a headbutt attack), jump, glide and breathe fire. This invariably limits gameplay variety and affects level design, although admittedly Spyro's fire-breathing abilities grant him occasional different uses, such as limited manipulation of cannons and a rare, yet necessary, operation of a lever.

Disposing of enemies is mostly a simple matter of charging into them or burning their backside, which can prove repetitive after a while. Realising this, Insomniac has thrown in the odd variation or two into the proceedings and it's refreshing to note that this also applies to levels late into the game. While these fail to inject the sort of variety found in *Mario 64*, for example, they do save players from what would otherwise be a dreary progression through indistinguishable level structure with only cosmetic changes for variety.

Graphically, however, it is difficult to fault *Spyro the Dragon*. The game's 3D engine handles the vast levels with remarkable smoothness and shows no signs of polygon folding, while maintaining a visual quality indicative of third-generation PlayStation titles.

Mario for the PlayStation? Well... no. But it is a competent – if sometimes uninspired – 3D platformer and easily the best example of its genre to grace Sony's 32bit machine yet.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten



The flying levels require Spyro to destroy sequences of objects







Spyro's enemies are a varied bunch, but given the young dragon's limited range of moves, they can usually be dealt with by using one of just two attacks

V2000

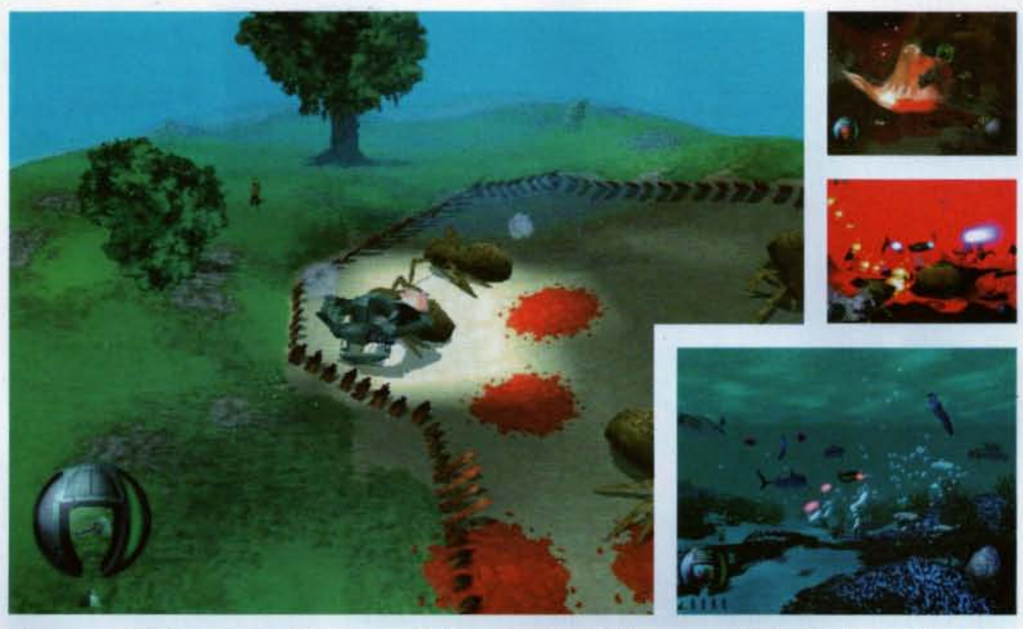
Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Grolier Int.**

Developer: **Frontier Developments**

Price: **£40**

Release: **Out now**



Lose a world to the enemy and it becomes a dark area, awash with flying adversaries (top right) – reminiscent of *Defender*. While underwater travel is different from airborne movement (right), currents even affect craft handling







Protecting humans from the virus does have its advantages (top) – they can be re-trained to appear later as power-up-building scientists

In an industry rife with regurgitation, it's surprising that David Braben's much-admired '80s title *Virus* (aka *Zarch*) hasn't been plagiarised more. And now Braben and his Frontier team have brought the concept bang up to date. The result is at the same time familiar and startlingly new, with its roots in its predecessor but a design informed and inspired by more contemporary gaming.

In reality, the original *Virus* was always more the critics' choice. But, using little more than the vector control system and thirdperson viewpoint of the original, *V2000*'s realistic physics makes for some impressively freeform gameplay. There are over 30 inter-connected game worlds and on each one a red virus is spreading, distributed by a range of mutated, over-sized insects and mythical creatures as intent on killing off the local populace as destroying everything in their path.

Rescuing humans is, therefore, usually your first concern. You can drop them off at a base, where they are re-educated to become scientists, capable of generating new power-ups. These range from the usual array of machine guns and lasers, to seeker missiles, water cannons, and – best of all – a possession ray, which switches control to the captured creature. With each of the 150 creatures possessing their own movement system it's a great addition.

Extra features like this give the game scope far beyond that of so many PC titles. There's rarely a single way to complete a level – in one it's possible to drain the water to expose undersea creatures or simply bomb them, for instance – and hidden exits make travel through the worlds anything but linear. Nintendo's style of multi-faceted world design has obviously been an influence.

The creatures inhabiting the worlds are also worth a mention. Insect limbs move convincingly, creatures clamber over one another, while winged animals actually beat their wings realistically, even turning their heads before banking. Like the environments, they're a world away from the overly polygonal space craft of so many other PC titles.

It's actually the control system, that fundamental link between *Virus* and *V2000*, that proves to be the weak spot. The learning curve has been smoothed out, with easy-paced early levels and a hovercraft mode that enables you to forget about the intricacies of vectored height control. But success soon demands switching to proper flight mode, where mastering the flight dynamics takes a lot of time and 3D targetting is simply a pain, particularly when attempting to pick off airborne rather earthbound adversaries.

But while it robs *V2000* of a sense of precision, the game is a pleasure to delve into. There's so much to see, and so many ways to achieve goals that exploration and experimentation with weapons and gadgets becomes the prime attraction.

Not quite the sequel for the masses some may have expected, then, but certainly one that's true to the spirit of the original. A fine return to form for Braben.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten

MEDIEVIL









Despite stylistic animation, the undead protaganist is not overly imaginative...

...although the diversity of each level is really remarkable. No two stages look the same. If only *all* polygon-based titles could be so adventurous

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **SCEE**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **£35**

Release: **Out now**







Players can return to previously completed areas via *Medievil*'s map screen (centre), in order to find missed secrets and new supplies

After a surprisingly protracted development period, it's pleasant to discover that *Medievil* is not the vapid, yet attractive title early versions suggested. Although its first few levels are misleading, perhaps nodding to simple *Gauntlet*-style fare in 3D, its later stages are markedly more involving.

With FMV links used to further the tale of *Medievil*'s reincarnated hero, Sir Daniel Fortesque, players attempt to complete a largely linear sequence of levels, each possessing its own visual style. After the disappointing first encounters, later stages introduce simple, yet engrossing puzzles. *Medievil*'s combat, too, matures from basic, elementary button-bashing to entertaining, even strategic, battles of will between the player and an eclectic range of onscreen foes.

Though hardly its genre's finest moment, Sony Europe's game pays homage to Japanese adventure classics. Despite different environments and its indigenous 'feel', it features set-pieces that wouldn't, put in context, appear too out of place in a *Metroid* or *Zelda* game. Indeed, *Medievil* features moments of genius, with simple gaming 'devices' used well. It's refreshing to note that at least *one* western codeshop is aware of NCL's work...

Such moments of brilliance, alas, are too few and far between. For every genuinely engrossing level, there are two that amount to simple maze negotiation and little else. In such areas, *Medievil* relies heavily on its stylish direction and visual appeal, yet many players will resent these workmanlike, 'makeweight' levels. But, in many senses, these may almost help to increase the game's appeal, by lowering the player's expectations to a level where even the most elementary set-piece or sub-level comes as a pleasant surprise.

Medievil, then, is a game that falls between two stools. Well crafted in many respects, underdeveloped in others, it's certainly one of the best 'arcade adventures' (as they were once known) available for PlayStation. But with so few contemporaries on Sony's machine, it wins such praise by default and through virtue, in equal measure.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten

DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **GT Interactive**
Developer: **N-Space**
Price: **£35**
Release: **Out now**



An all-male version of the eponymous Lara, Duke is still a fast-talking, wise-cracking gobshite. But the ladies love him, right?

One of the PC's original firstperson, shareware shoot 'em ups, *Duke Nukem* converted gamers to its cause at an alarming rate. And following that game's reasonably sound translation to the consoles, GT Interactive has used the licence to create versions for both the PlayStation and N64.

However, in the translation from PC to console systems, *Duke Nukem TTK* and its (distant) N64 cousin *Zero Hour* have shifted from the firstperson viewpoint to the thirdperson. And – surprisingly – it works pretty well, with Duke leaping around Lara-style, hanging from ledges and clambering over boxes. Both new versions of *Duke* are set in various time zones, which for the PlayStation incorporate Modern, Wild West, Roman, Medieval and Future. Thankfully the various tricks and traps have been designed to use each setting, rather than sticking to a standard formula.



Duke's new flame thrower is the ultimate way to barbecue bad guys

Weaponry, meanwhile is as loud as you might expect from a *Duke Nukem* title.

While graphically not the cleanest, *TTK* is at least smooth, with only occasional glitches. The twoplayer deathmatch game pushes the engine beyond its limits, but can prove compelling. Against high-end PC titles, PlayStation games are starting to look disturbingly like Mega Drive fodder, but that doesn't stop *TTK* being unexpectedly good fun.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten

GUNBARL



While a lot of the tasks are structurally similar to *GunBarl*'s predecessor, new graphics and twoplayer fun justify the sequel

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **In-house**
Price: **¥5,800 (£25)**
Release: **Out now (Japan)**

GunBullet owners are unlikely to be surprised at *GunBarl*'s (as in 'GunBarrel') content. As a sequel, it is, after all, firmly rooted in the (restrictive) gameplay of its predecessor with little room for extremist alterations. The proceedings are therefore very similar to the original, requiring increasing levels of eye-to-hand coordination to complete the tasks.

While the oneplayer option provides short bursts of fun, adding another G-Con ensures frantic, highly competitive action. It may not push the title's longevity into *FFVII* territory, but it does provide a very enjoyable antidote to post-pub blues. Indeed, no doubt realising the twoplayer potential in such a game, this time around the emphasis is clearly on dual-gun antics, reflected by the numerous options available to Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid wannabes. Seemingly countless cooperative, competitive, and team battle modes offer every conceivable combination.

While by no means an essential purchase (particularly if you already have *GunBullet* tucked away), there is plenty of twoplayer fun to be had. And despite the dearth of G-Con-compatible software out there at the moment, owners of Namco's lightgun should still regard it as more than merely a desperate acquisition.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten



Some sequences require frantic trigger speed (such as shooting a falling car) rather than accuracy

THE UNHOLY WAR

Crystal Dynamics' latest game (previewed in **E**62) features two opposing alien forces engaged in fierce combat on the planet Xsarra. This disruption, in an otherwise peaceful world, is the result of a broken treaty between the two tribes: the technologically advanced Teknos, and the dim-but-nice Arcanes, Xsarra's native inhabitants.

Of course, far more important than the plot is the game itself. An intriguing mixture of 3D strategy and combat, *The UnHoly War* comprises two distinct game modes. The first is a straightforward team battle option, where two players select one of eight characters and enter a CPU-selected arena to continue fighting until one of the two has run out of combatants. The other option is a turn-based strategy game in the traditional sense, allowing you to control your forces around the 3D map before switching to realtime for the combat sequences.





Combat can be air (left) or ground-based. All of the characters possess specific attacks

The characters each feature their own special attack moves, some of which are graphically impressive. However, you'll discover that certain fights are over surprisingly quickly as a result of very short energy bars and severely unbalanced characters – a significant shortcoming for a game so reliant on its combat aspect.

Ironically, while its very nature prevents it from reaching massmarket status, *The UnHoly War* is an interesting idea, providing much-needed variety to the PlayStation's mostly conservative catalogue.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Eidos**

Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**

Price: **£40**

Release: **Out now**





Unfortunately, some of the characters are too powerful in relation to others, resulting in very unbalanced fights that have a tendency to end frustratingly quickly

TENCHU: STEALTH ASSASSINS (PAL)

Having acquired the UK publishing rights to *Tenchu*, Activision promised to make substantial changes to the Japanese version **Edge** reviewed six issues ago. The most significant alteration, other than the obvious liberty to leave the Kanji dictionary gathering dust in the corner of the living room, has to be the inclusion of two new levels, which may explain the time taken for this PAL version to emerge.

However, the control system seems untouched, retaining the awkward, occasionally clumsy feel of the original release. It can be worked around, of course, but it's just unnecessarily unrefined, particularly when compared to what Konami has achieved with *Metal Gear Solid*.

Nevertheless, there is still much to like about *Tenchu*. The grappling hook remains one of the most interesting videogaming features of recent times, and a general sense of tension is genuinely conveyed as you employ all your ninja skills to run across rooftops and sneak up on enemies.

While there isn't a vast amount of variety in terms of gameplay (nothing on *Metal Gear*'s scale, anyway. See p78), progression through the levels is enjoyable, and there are plenty of commendable touches throughout, which should reward those prepared to put up with the control system's slightly maladroit nature.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten



Use your stealthy ninja abilities to prevent encounters like this (above)

Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Activision**

Developer: **Sony Music Inc**

Price: **£40**

Release: **Out now**



Surprisingly, none of the blood from the original Japanese version seems to have had to face censorship

PROFILE: Bizarre Creations, Dreamcast pioneers



The Bizarre crew (with their freebie Dreamcast laser pens) from left to right: Matt Birch, lead coder on *Metropolis*; Martyn Chudley, managing director; Sarah Dixon, marketing director; Walter Lynsdale, technical director

Hauled in under Sega's wing by SoE president Kazutoshi Miyake, Bizarre Creations (creator of *F1* and *F1'97* for Psygnosis) is one of the much lauded 'one-and-a-half-party' Dreamcast European developers. Currently carving its darkly shrouded title *Metropolis* (thought to involve driving various licensed cars around a vast city) into a marketable form for next autumn's western Dreamcast launch, the company's key constituents were cornered by **Edge** at ECTS. A brief discussion on the technical merits of Dreamcast ensued…

Edge: What kind of performance levels are you getting out of Dreamcast at the moment?

Walter Lynsdale: The Set 4 boxes do just over a million – CPU performance is very good, the raw geometry rate is something like eight to ten million.

Edge: Is it as proficient at floating-point operations as Sega is claiming?

WL: It is; we can do something like ten million transformations per second.

Martyn Chudley: That's if you program it as a console.

WL: You can take straightforward PC C code and port it across, but you do have to use the specific floating-point instructions to get the best results. It can operate as a PC in a console box.

Edge: What sort of performance do you get if you use *WinCE*?

WL: You only get about two-thirds. It's a console, and you need to use it as one.

Edge: Dreamcast boasts more RAM than any console in history [16Mb], but is there enough to run the latest PC titles?

WL: Again, once people start using it as a console, they'll be able to do what PC games do in 32Mb. The texture formats are very good – most 3D cards only support 16bit colour. Dreamcast has VRAM compression that's a lot better than we thought it would be. The quality-to-memory ratio is higher than the PlayStation's 4bit textures, so the 5Mb of VRAM that you have left is more like 16Mb of PC VRAM. It can do 16bit textures, but you wouldn't want to use them all the time.

Edge: Which are you using, *WinCE* or Sega's own Dreamcast OS?

MC: We're using both, but you can pick and choose bits, so we're just using whatever we need. I think it depends on the developer – PC teams might use it all, but they can go to the low-level stuff for just the 3D renderer. It's very, very flexible. It's the same as on PC – if you wrote a C engine rather than an assembler one, you'd get a 25 per cent performance hit.

Technical aspects aside, Bizarre Creations has yet to be told whether Dreamcast will feature a modem in Europe. However, Martyn Chudley views *Metropolis* as an international product, and plans to utilise the feature regardless. **Edge** awaits further information with interest…



Workstation

In the second of a series of insights into the work environments of some of the industry's finest, and having met the man last month, **Edge** offers the irrefutable evidence: that Iguana's *Turok 2* project manager David Dienstbier *is* Turok. Surrounding himself with Poison Dart frogs and various lizards, Iguana West certainly has its hands full

Chameleons "Everything about them is outrageous. They're sanity maintenance; I spend most of my time at work so having my animals around helps make long hours less tedious."

Big hair "When I wore a flat top for six years everyone thought I was a marine. When I shaved my head they thought I looked dangerous. Now I just have to deal with the 'Conan' jokes… Ladies, your opinions are appreciated!"

Frogs "My frogs are fantastic. I have 19 at the moment, including two Poison Dart frogs. In the morning they all get really energetic and are hysterical to watch."



Viper GTS picture "The real thing hasn't been ordered yet. But soon. Oh yes, very soon. I want it so bad it makes my salivary glands ache."

Geckos "I have two Giant Leaf Tailed Geckos. I bought them simply because their camouflage amazes me, and they're nocturnal which means they're up when I'm at the office late."

Disturbingly large biceps "I love to lift weights, although at the tail end of a project my regimen suffers quite a bit. It all stems from being one fat little shit for the first 18 years of my life! I put on muscle very easily so it was something I found myself enjoying a lot."



The trials of a start-up developer: part two

After co-founding Lionhead Studios with Peter Molyneux, Demis Hassabis set up his own development house, Elixir Studios. This month he explains how a few beers can persuade anyone to join your company

Constructing the team

"A publisher once told me that he had stopped trying to sign companies and instead was interested only in signing the individuals that made up the talent of the company. He felt that the people in a development house were everything – and I couldn't agree more. Names and faces started spinning round my head as I sat down and carefully considered who I wanted to join Elixir.

I was conscious that the choices I made now would be crucially important. The founding members had to be just right as they would set the tone of the whole company and be instrumental in creating a good working atmosphere. Not only would they have to be the most talented people I knew for their respective positions, but also really enthusiastic and passionate about games.

Another important point I had picked up from working in small teams is that everyone had to get on. Even one bad egg can spoil the spirit of a small company. However, people with all the above qualities are extremely rare. But after much painstaking deliberation I had, on paper at least, a team I was really happy with. Assuming I could persuade everyone to join, I felt the assembled team would be capable of rivalling any in the world.

I first met Joe McDonagh while still at Lionhead. He bounced into the office clutching a huge cloth covered in hexagons, several folders stuffed full of well-used paper and a handful of Citadel miniatures. As he proceeded to lay the cloth out on the table and explain to me the rules of a new game he had invented, the situation felt more like some sort of bizarre wargaming gathering than a job interview! I was expecting something out of the ordinary given that his application consisted of a bottle containing a message (authentically tea-stained of course) from a person shipwrecked on the stifling island of Korporate (he worked for a blue chip company). It did cross my mind that this person might well be insane, but also probably very creative, thus I had immediately called him in for an interview.

Following the 'handbook of good interview techniques', I decided to probe him about his purported interests. He had listed a multitude of activities as diverse as origami and boxing for Oxford University. But after only narrowly beating him in a race to make the classic origami model, the crane, I wisely decided against testing out his boxing skills. So, an afternoon of game playing later and I had decided that I was going to give Joe the job. His enthusiasm and commitment impressed me and most importantly he passionately loved games. Clearly he was crazy (after all, what sort of man comes to a job interview armed with origami papers in his wallet?) but that convinced me that he would fit in all the more.

He hadn't started at Lionhead by the time I had left, so with a little persuasion (and after a few pints' worth of bribes) I convinced him to give up his dream job to risk all with a start-up company.

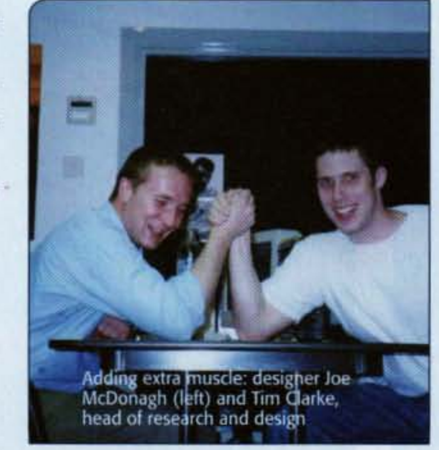
The next person on my hit list was Tim Clarke. We met while he was studying for a Masters in Theoretical Physics. Besides his academic stuff, he was always tinkering with something of his own. I remember once clambering up the four flights of stairs to his room (a long way in those lazy student days) but thinking it was well worth it after being blown away by the stuff he showed me. He also somehow found time in between his studies to write a successful game for Apogee Software.

Tim has been a hardcore hacker for as long as he can remember. During one summer, while still at school, he wrote a demo so cool that it became a phenomenon on the Internet. Called the *Mars Demo*, it was a fly-by over Mars with the planet's terrain rendered in realtime. As a result, he was headhunted by NASA. When he is programming he always has at least 5,000 desktop windows open (all in an eye-destroying four-point font) and can normally be caught typing furiously in a trance-like state, looking like a man possessed, which of course he is.

"An important point I had picked up from working in small teams is that everyone had to get on. Even one bad egg can spoil the spirit of a small company"

Now this description might have conjured up an image in your mind of a geek. However, as with all stereotypes, this is only partially true as Tim also happens to powerlift for Britain in his spare time. He regularly recounts Herculean feats of dead-lifting 215Kgs while considering spline-mapping algorithms, making the rest of our bodies and minds hurt just at the thought of it. These facts combined with his hacking ability seem to point to the possibility that he may be some sort of cyborg.

But cyborgs aside, Tim is by far the best engine programmer I have ever met or worked with, so I was overjoyed when he agreed to join the team. He intends one day to be the next John Carmack, and I think that he may well make it.


Adding extra muscle: designer Joe McDonagh (left) and Tim Clarke, head of research and design

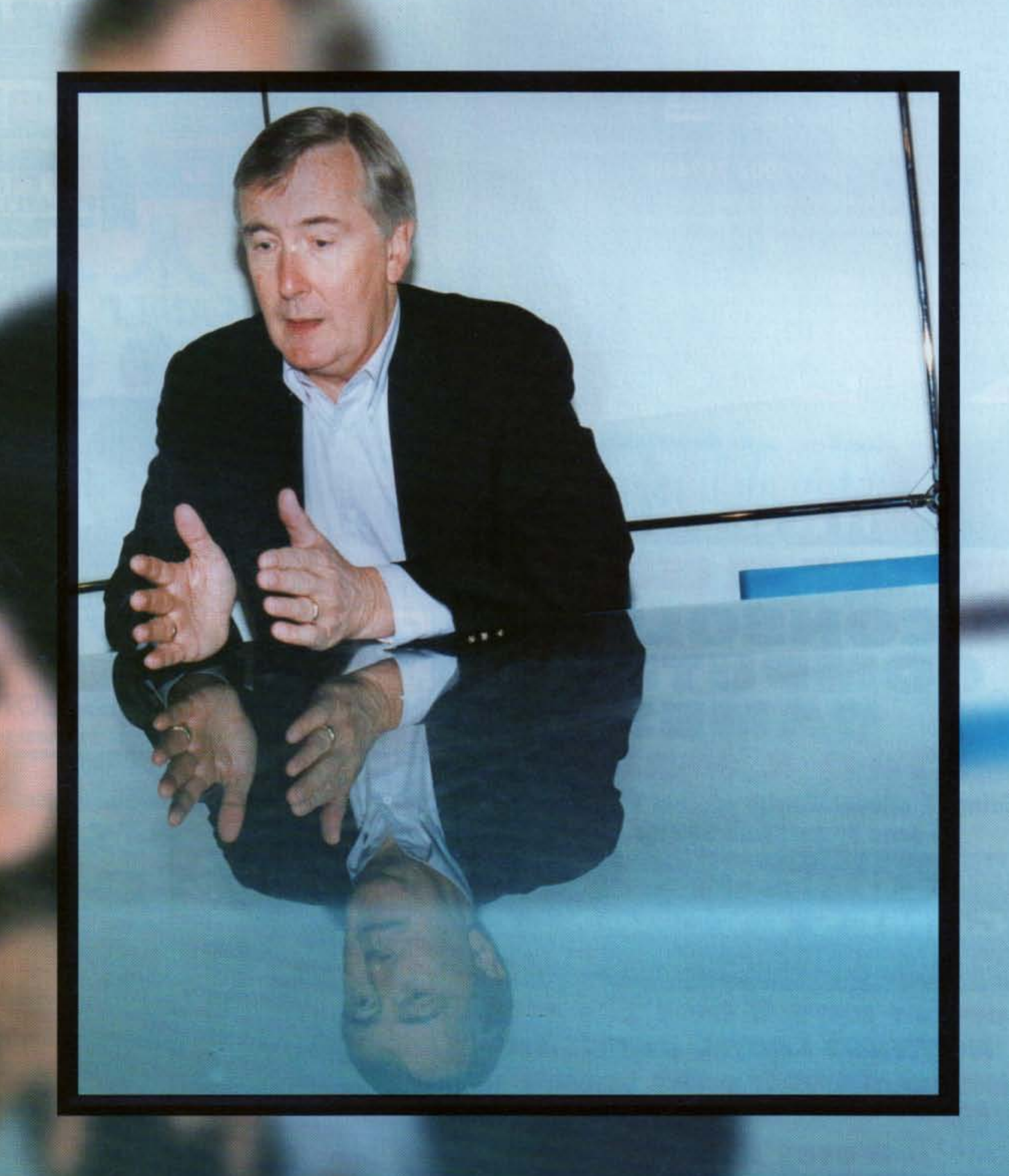
So to my pleasant surprise everything was going really smoothly. Getting the ball rolling is always hard and now a lot of momentum had been built up it would be much easier to convince further people to join the team.

And what with Joe's boxing skills and Tim's powerlifting antics, at least if it turned out we couldn't make games we could at least console ourselves in the knowledge that we could probably beat any other development team in a fight."



Edge moves

Programmers, artists, engineers, producers, animators, project managers – they're all essential to the industry, and they all read **Edge**. The following pages carry a phenomenal variety of jobs for graduates, professionals and any other interested parties who think they could make it in the videogame scene. Apply within...



an audience with... HOWARD LINCOLN

At ECTS Nintendo of America's president confirmed the company's pledge of a renewed commitment to Europe

Nintendo is back in Europe. That was the message being loudly shouted across the floors of ECTS, beneath a gigantic Nintendo 64 banner to rival Sony's own vast PlayStation hoarding. And to illustrate this renewed commitment to its loyal yet desperately under-supported European customer base, Nintendo of America president **Howard Lincoln** spent three days at the show, mixing with attendees on the Nintendo stand. Actually, 'renewed' is perhaps a misnomer – Nintendo's history of risible PAL conversions and weak marketing support, not to mention the dissolution of its UK offices before handing over to a subsidiary of John Menzies, means that any change of stance is worth taking note of. With this in mind, **Edge** tracked down Howard Lincoln on the morning of ECTS's final day, keen to discover what this loudly trumpeted 'commitment' actually entails for the European gamer.

Edge: It's good to see Nintendo finally making an effort in Europe, but don't you think that it may be a case of too little, too late, in order to win the current hardware battle?

"The battle we face right now is to ***increase our market share against Sony and its existing format****, which in my opinion has a long life cycle"*

Howard Lincoln: If you step back and look at reality, you realise that in the handheld category we have virtually 100 per cent market share. And that's a category that is growing with the introduction of the Color Game Boy. In the next-generation hardware battle, if anything, we're in round one or two. Given the length of the cycle, I don't think it's too late at all. The history of the SNES is a good example; there was a period in time when Sega pushed ahead of Nintendo in the US, and a lot of people believed that Sega won that battle. They didn't win that battle at all – they not only lost the battle, they lost their shirt.

Edge: But in terms of life cycle, the N64 is going to straddle both PlayStation and its successor, not to mention Dreamcast. Does it worry you that the consumer will start to see the N64 as a weaker machine?

HL: I'm not really too concerned about that, because I don't think we've seen the true power of the N64. We've just announced that we're going to launch the 4Mb expansion pack in the US and Europe before the end of the year. That will have a dramatic effect on the graphics capability of the N64. Given the kind of games coming from Rare, for example, the difference between what we'll see on a next-next-generation Sony or Sega machine and what we can do on the N64 isn't going to be that great. The battle we face right now is to increase our market share against Sony and its existing format, which in my opinion has a long life cycle.

Edge: There's a strong rumour going around that Sony will be launching PlayStation 2 worldwide next autumn...

HL: People are talking about a lot of things. Whether that comes to pass or not remains to be seen. Look, everybody is always working on a next-generation hardware system. Those hardware systems have a zero installed base and they're up against existing platforms that have huge libraries of games and a large installed base. So,



I think it's a mistake to start worrying about things that don't exist, or things that might be coming to the market in a month or a year, and look at the fact that right now we're trying to increase the market share of N64 in Europe and the US. And we're doing that in a pretty logical way, which is by producing some really outstanding games.

"I think that the support we're getting from thirdparties is very strong... I'm really bullish about N64's chances"

Edge: Where are those games coming from? The feedback that Edge has from developers is that they're not getting the support they need from Nintendo. And they're certainly not getting the support that Sony and Sega offer them.

HL: If that's the feedback you're getting, then it's nonsense. If anything, the kind of support that we're giving N64 publishers has dramatically increased in the last 12 months or so. Every single major thirdparty publisher is supporting the N64 platform, both in the US and in Europe, with very strong games. We have internal development that is second to none. I'm not aware that Sony is making *Zelda*, nor did they make *GoldenEye*.

Edge: It did manage to come up with *Gran Turismo*...

HL: Yeah, but I think if you look at the data in the US, and you look at games in terms of total units sold, the one thing that you will find is that most of the top-selling games are N64 games, either done by Nintendo or by thirdparty publishers. So I think that the support we're getting from thirdparties is very strong, and I've not detected any weakening of that. And it makes perfectly good sense, because the N64's installed base is increasing. I'm really bullish about N64's chances.

Edge: Will that growing installed base in the US and Europe ever be high enough to release the 64DD?

HL: We don't have any plans to release the 64DD either in Europe or the United States. And that decision doesn't really have anything to do with the level of the installed base, it has to do with the declining price of chips and cartridges, so there's not as much of a need for 64DD from a pricing standpoint. But the primary reason for us not releasing 64DD, certainly this year or next in the US or Europe, is that we have not found a killer application for that product. We're not about to foist it off on gamers simply because we said we would, regardless of any value it has.

Edge: Wasn't there a temptation to push an upcoming product, say *Super Mario 64 2*, on to 64DD to make people buy the unit?

HL: We have and are continuing to find ways to use 64DD in interesting ways, particularly the writeable feature. But we simply haven't satisfied ourselves that we've found a product, or a series of products that reach the quality level that would make it a good idea to launch the DD. It's more important for us to be frank and candid with our consumers and say, 'We've got this product, we're working on it, but hey, the price of software is coming down and we haven't found something that is acceptable to our standards.' And when we find that, *if* we do, then we'll launch the product.

Edge: So there'll be no 64DD launch in Japan either?

HL: I would anticipate that in Japan, where the market is a little bit different and where we have a better chance of finding that killer app, it may well be launched. But it will not be launched before June of next year.

Edge: Even though, as you say, the price of semi-conductors is still falling, many thirdparties are still extremely worried about the inventory costs related to releasing N64 titles. In hindsight, does Nintendo now regret the decision to go with carts and not CD?

HL: No. If anything the decision to go with cartridges was probably one of the smartest things we did, because we don't have the private piracy problem that Sony does. Nor do thirdparty publishers who publish on the N64 platform have the prospect of seeing their CD-ROM counterfeited on every street corner by the private piracy that is funded in part by Sony, as it also manufactures CD-ROM copiers. In the case of Nintendo thirdparty publishers, all of the major thirdparty



Photography: Nath

publishers are supporting the N64 platform, all of them are making money on this platform, all of them are seeing retail prices that are well within acceptable ranges. The only thing that they have to be careful of is inventory risk, and in the main I haven't seen anybody going out of business doing N64 thirdparty products.

Edge: But even for a fairly well-established company like Gremlin Interactive, which is about to release its first N64 title, *Body Harvest*, it's undoubtedly a daunting prospect.

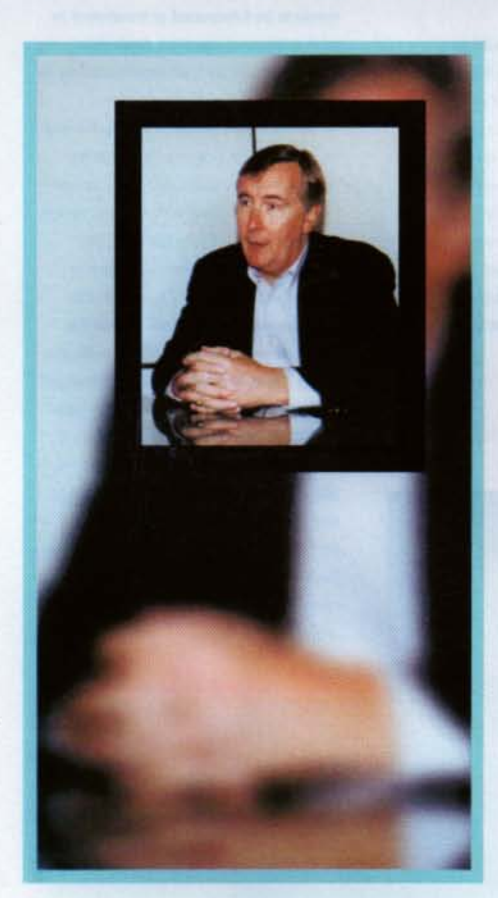
HL: I'm certainly not going to say to you that doing cartridges is less risky than doing CD-ROM. I will say that while there is a higher inventory cost risk associated with cartridge-based software, there is not the piracy problem that is associated with CD-ROM. You have to ask yourself would you rather take an inventory risk that you can control or take a counterfeiting risk over which you have no control.

Edge: Times are changing, and as you say, everyone is always working on a new hardware system – including Nintendo. You can't be planning to persevere with the cartridge format into another generation...

HL: First of all, the decision on the software medium for Nintendo's next platform hasn't been made yet, so it's premature to say if we'll stay with cartridges or not. When we chose the cartridge format over CD-ROM, one of the primary reasons for doing that was the expectation that we could not control the counterfeiting of CD-ROM software. I can tell you that in the future we will try and protect ourselves and our thirdparty publishers against counterfeiting. Whatever the software medium is, you have to build in strong security measures to keep the counterfeiters at bay.



*"The primary reason for us **not releasing 64DD**, this year or next, is that we have **not found a killer application** for that product"*



Edge: Moving back to the subject of today and Europe, Nintendo's recent in-house PAL conversions have been fairly well executed. However, it seems that most thirdparties either lack the necessary tools, time or money. What do you attribute it to?

HL: I think that we are giving much more support to thirdparty publishers in terms of technology, in terms of working with developers – whether they're in the US, Japan or Europe. So I think that work, and the people behind it, has contributed to better PAL conversions. In the NES and the SNES days we used to leave it to the thirdparty developers.

Edge: But a real sign of Nintendo's interest in European consumers would be to ensure that every PAL conversion is the best quality it can be.

HL: It would be better to say this: that we are entirely committed to the European gaming market. We're not playing games when we say that. We certainly have an abundance of resources to allocate to the European gamers' market and we are doing that, and we are going to continue to do it. We are bound and determined to increase our market share in Europe – whether that's with N64 or Color Game Boy. Our presence here at ECTS is simply an indication of that commitment.

Edge: One aspect in which the PlayStation has excelled at in Europe and the UK is marketing and building the brand. Conversely, that's been one of Nintendo's weakest suits. What are you doing to address that?

HL: We are in the process of shifting our emphasis to pan-European marketing. In the coming months you'll see work that's been created by a new agency and that it is more brand or image oriented, and is skewed at a higher age group. We are well aware that we need to upgrade our marketing campaigns in Europe and to shift from individual countries to a pan-European strategy that includes more emphasis on brand advertising. So we'll address that problem just as we're addressing the others.

an audience with... KAZUTOSHI MIYAKE

Looking confident in the run up to Dreamcast's imminent launch, Sega Europe's CEO talks tactics

Edge: Looking ahead towards Dreamcast, is it your final chance to get back into the home market?

Kazutoshi Miyake: No, we don't think so, but whenever we launch new hardware, we always believe it's the best machine ever made. And we never think of the next machine, but the motto for Sega is: 'always creating, always challenging,' we'll never give up. So long as we stay in the market, we'll hold our own platform.

Edge: If it isn't the success you're hoping for, does that mean there would never be another Sega console?

KM: No. We've never thought of any other machine but the Dreamcast, we think it's the best machine ever made.

Edge: What strengths will you be selling it on?

KM: I think that Dreamcast will be sold on the fact that whatever the gamer expects will come to be true. Which means that every game creator has their own dream and I think Dreamcast is a machine which will make their dreams come true. Also gamers have their own ideals, which demands stunning realism from a game and Dreamcast can make everything possible.

Edge: Are you pleased with the response from Europe?

KM: Very much so, yes. Particularly from people in the field. They're excited about the performance of the hardware. As I said, with current platforms, there are certain limits to achieving the dream. Before the step up to the 32bit machine, the developer had to do all the effects on the software side. But Dreamcast has enough performance to achieve those special effects like transparencies, smoke and explosions on the hardware side. This is a machine which will make everyone's dreams come true. It will give developers much more freedom to create and develop software.

Edge: What style of game will you initially be selling with the system?

KM: If we have to talk about genres, we have to respect the very strong genres which are so popular in Europe: racing and sports games and maybe action-adventure. But we have to develop software which will really prove the performance of our hardware.

Edge: How do you feel about the number of conversions that are coming to Dreamcast from the PC?

KM: The borders between the PC and consoles are becoming smaller and smaller. Yet PC conversions aren't always appreciated by the console gamers. Therefore we want to focus on exclusive titles for Dreamcast. Sometime in the future we may have to accept some conversions from PC titles.

Edge: The built-in modem and Sega's Internet strategy is important to the Japanese market, but this appears to remain a grey area in Europe. Can you clarify any specific details?

KM: The main concept of Dreamcast is play and communication, but this concept needs to be interpreted or transferred to each territory or situation. Again this concept should be translated according to the progress of business. So the communications between the device and the modem are very important. We're studying how to position Dreamcast from day one – then beyond that, at the second and later stages. We haven't said yet whether we should have a modem in Europe, but we are very keen that this machine should have such a capability

Edge: As a past market leader with the Mega Drive, is it important that you get back to that and lead the market now?

KM: Definitely, we will come back as a market leader, we are not aiming at third place. We came to Europe ten years ago and we had always been the market leader and only in the past couple of years have we been behind our competitors. But we will come back as the market leader soon.

"We respect the genres popular in Europe... But we have to develop software which will prove the performance of our hardware"

Edge: Do you have a launch date in mind for Europe?

KM: As you've mentioned in **Edge**, this is a war of the consoles. And I'm not militant, but to win the battle we have a calendar and it's too early to announce the date of launching. Yes, we have some target dates based on which, we are preparing marketing arrangements. All I can say is that it will be in time for Christmas 1999 – that's our target date.

Edge: When you do launch before Christmas next year, how many titles will be available?

KM: We are now carefully selecting the titles for launch, and numbers are not a major issue this time because Japan is launching Dreamcast one year in advance. But around 12 titles will be sufficient or adequate for the initial launch. Then towards the end of Christmas we are hoping to release about 30 titles – from both ourselves and from thirdparty companies.

Edge: So how many European publishers do you have on board?

KM: We are really in discussion with all major publishers and some of them are being announced at ECTS. There are about 15 publishers across Europe, some are based in America, but altogether 15 publishers.





Photography: Simon Leibowitz

an audience with...

CHRIS DEERING

PlayStation might be looking dated, but SCEE president Chris Deering claims the console still has everything to play for



Edge: You've dropped the PlayStation's price from £129 to £99 – what sort of impact do you expect that to have on the market?

Chris Deering: Well, it's a magical price point, it will open some eyes among parents who are looking for a good gift idea. It's good value, and the stores like to run ads at magic price points. We have a TV ad running that shows the new price, and I'm sure it will have a positive effect. Sales have been very good, so I can't say how much more positive it will be, but it definitely will be positive.

Edge: Some speculators are saying that this is the PlayStation's peak year, and that things are going to go downhill from next year. What do you think about that suggestion?

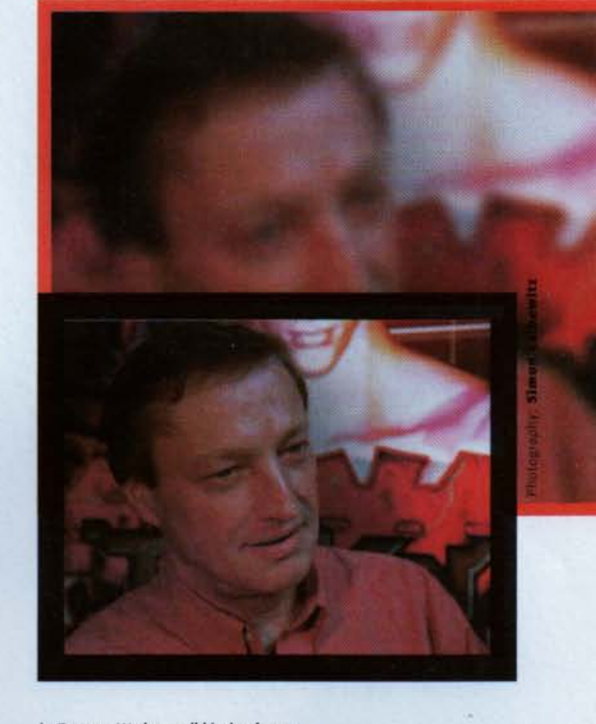
CD: I think that people have looked at the history of gaming. Going back to the early Atari days, you can point to cycles that have eventually come into play. This will be our fourth Christmas and it will be our biggest Christmas. We will sell as much this year between August and December as we did in the whole calendar year in 1997 and that's going to be the fourth Christmas. You can't use the historical business cycles of consoles to predict PlayStation, because PlayStation has already gone above the penetration level of those older consoles. There is a kind of phenomenon which is placing the notion of having a PlayStation in the home alongside a VCR, as a general common form of home entertainment. The cycle for this kind of concept can go on for a decade. Certainly, I don't feel at all that business next year will be smaller than this year, the number of titles coming up, the number of countries we're going in to, the more affordable price, quality of the software, all would suggest that business will continue. We have in Europe a number of different countries, all at different levels along the penetration curve. If those countries at the 10, 12 and 13 per cent penetration were slowing down, one could make an assumption that over time that curve would continue. But as I said earlier, our business in Australia and New Zealand, which has one of the highest penetrations, is growing faster than ever before. If you track that back across the other countries, it looks like it will be a very exciting year in 1999.

Edge: How do you feel about the existing technology in terms of how far developers have pushed it? Do you feel that a plateau is being reached?

CD: I think if you look at some of the early titles from 1995 and 1996 and then compare them with the current range including *GT*, *Tekken 3*, *Crash Bandicoot 3*, *Metal Gear Solid*, you'll see that there is a continuing forward progress. There are some new tools available to programmers and developers which enables them to compress information better: to get better speed, better graphic resolution. I think there is a lot further for PlayStation software to go. There are a lot of people working on it, the proof will be in the pudding.

Edge: What about Sega and Dreamcast, how do you feel about their prospects?

CD: We haven't seen much of what is planned for Europe. In fact, the release in Japan hasn't been totally revealed in all of its aspects. I think any new machine that comes in and revitalises or invigorates an industry has got to be good. In the end, gaming is in competition with all kinds of other leisure activity. When Nintendo 64 finally entered the market, our sales grew at a faster rate than ever before. Competition is good, new technology is good, we have plenty of ammunition left to play with and to fight a good fight.



"*In Japan they've announced the PDA*, so there's some likelihood of that being on **the market in 1999 in Europe**"

Edge: Let's move forward to September 1999 – what will your main weapon be against Dreamcast?

CD: Well, in Japan they've announced the PDA so there's some likelihood of that product, that enhancement of PlayStation being on the market in 1999 in Europe. We have all kinds of new products coming in on the software area. This year we had the Dual Shock analogue controller and we have plenty of new and exciting things to keep the user base of PlayStation satisfied. I don't really want to comment on speculation about R&D projects, but clearly Sony is a big company with lots of resources. It designed the chip on PlayStation 1 and when the time is right something will be said.

DIRT DEVILS

WHILE THE CONSOLE RACING MARKET FOCUSES ON REALISM, COIN-OPS JUST KEEP GETTING SILLIER

Developer: Sega (AM3)
Release: Out now (Japan)
Origin: Japan









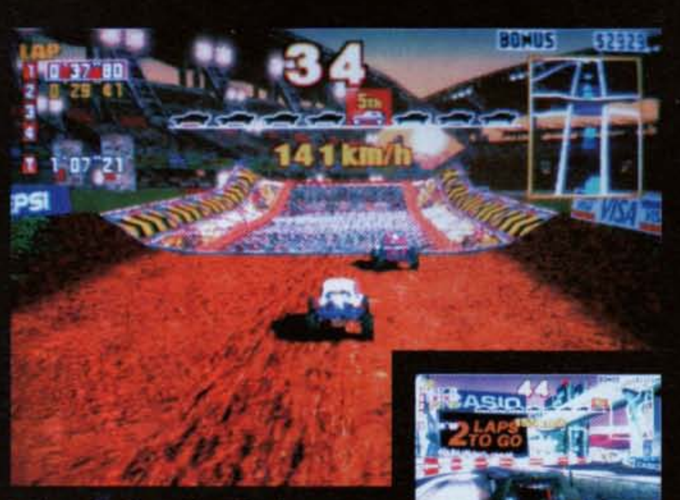
The graphical quality of the tracks, particularly the Stadium complex (above), is impressive. If reaching the time check is a case of ploughing through the opposition, so be it (left)

After a relatively long absence, Sega's AM3 department returns with a Model 3-powered racing game. Best described as the offspring from a hypothetical *Daytona* and *Sega Rally* liaison, *Dirt Devils* features road endurance races where contact between vehicles is essential if a faster lap or a better racing line can be gained from it.

Three stages are offered: the Canyon (peppered with giant rock pools and tunnels), the figure-of-eight layout of the Stadium section (complete with obligatory intersections and ramps allowing you to jump over 20 stationary buses), and Twin City 400's tricky, technical mix of street and desert roads you have to negotiate with only a pair of headlights for illumination. Naturally, different vehicles offer a variety of handling characteristics, affected by the usual convenient balance between quick, nimble, fast, heavy, slow, and powerful.

In addition to the realism created by the game's visuals, the cabinet includes a subwoofer under the driver's seat to simulate vehicle vibrations as well as incorporating several in-seat speakers for surrounding effects. Also, like in real dirt racing, a double point scoring system is implemented so that you're rated on lap bonuses and time points.

In the ever-crowded arcade racing market, any title displaying the slightest amount of novelty, whether recycled from ageing coin-ops or not, is likely to be well received by players craving new titles to pump fistfuls of coins into. E



The Stadium's straights allow for some impressive speed-fuelled jumps (above)







Thankfully, the game's three tracks demand a healthy variety of skills from potential players

OCEAN HUNTER

SEGA'S LATEST MODEL 3 VENTURE SETS ITS SIGHTS FIRMLY ON THE ARCADE'S BIGGEST FISH

Developer: Sega (AM1)
Release: TBA
Origin: Japan





You might have some big fish to fry, but to progress you have to start with the smallest swimmers

Introduced as part of Sega's recent Summer Private Show where the company displayed its latest arcade offerings, *Ocean Hunter* is the latest lightgun-based outing from AM1. Running on a Model 3 board, all of the action occurs underwater with players having to annihilate whatever is lurking in the ocean's murky depths. Shockingly, at the end of each of the seven levels, you face an impressively huge boss which takes the shape of one of the most deadly creatures the sea has to offer.

The frantic yet pick-up-and-play nature of the gameplay and splendid visuals should ensure it mainstream success.







Completing levels brings you face to face with an end-of-level boss, which – rather inevitably – will take the form of one of the most dangerous of deep-sea dwellers. Conger eels and octopuses pale into insignificance when confronted with the jaws of a Great White (above)

TETRIS GRAND MASTER

NOT CONTENT WITH DEVELOPING ADMIRABLE BEAT 'EM UPS, ARIKA TRIES ITS HAND AT PUZZLERS

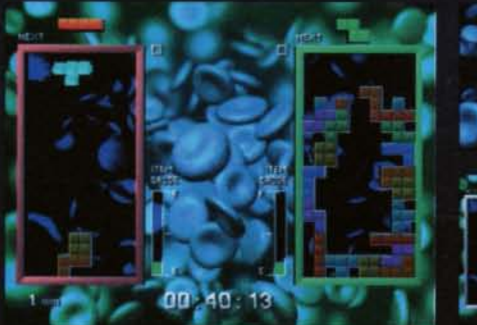
Developer: Capcom (Arika)
Release: Out now (Japan)
Origin: Japan

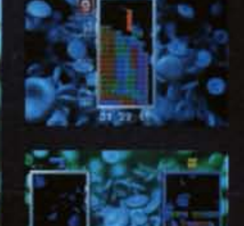
Almost ten years after Alexey Pajitnov's classic puzzle game first emerged on to an unsuspecting gaming scene, Arika, developer of the *Street Fighter EX* series, has unveiled its contribution to the game's evolution with some novel (and copyrighted) concepts. The most notable, the initial rotation system, allows you one 90-degree spin of the next brick while it's still in the 'next item' box, before it enters the playing area. There are others, of course. The temporary landing system shows a brick's final position by means of a transparent image, which mirrors the movements of the falling brick.

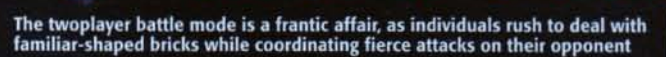
Points-obsessed players should revel in the game's scoring system, which evaluates performance throughout the proceedings according to current score, the state of the screen, and time elapsed, before grading.

One or two players can participate in normal mode, of course, but the fun really lies in the battle option. Cunning individuals can make use of the attack and defence options available to them, including the ability to enlarge an opponent's bricks, or moving the whole field to one side, freeing up the playing area.

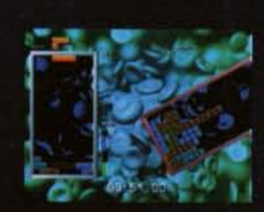
After countless sequels, Arika's addition manages to introduce some innovative features that should prove highly playable.

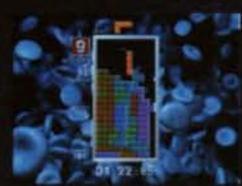






The twoplayer battle mode is a frantic affair, as individuals rush to deal with familiar-shaped bricks while coordinating fierce attacks on their opponent





After this interpretation of *Tetris*, just how many other elements can be brought to the concept?



Capcom Generation 1

Vertically scrolling shoot 'em ups come and go (or at least they did in the '80s), but here's one set of examples whose place in the coin-op hall of fame is fairly assured...

First previewed in E59, the first of the two retro coin-ops compilations from Capcom has finally hit Japan's streets after a brief delay.

The trio of titles offered to PlayStation owners here should do more than just keep those of you old enough to fondly remember their respective premiere at the local arcade happy. The series' gameplay has survived the interim years with surprising grace, with all three retaining their taut playability, which should prove enough to convert substantial numbers of contemporary videogamers to the now rarely seen vertical shoot 'em up genre.

Released in 1984, *1942* is the grandfather of the series and other than being rather cosmetically challenged, doesn't really show its age, remaining a compulsive oneplayer experience featuring first-rate level and attack-wave design.

Its sequel, *1943*, introduces the concept of selectable power-ups, an energy bar, plus cooperative play (energy can be shared between the two players should one of them be in trouble).

Originally a Japan-only release, *1943 Kai*, continues where its predecessor left off, but its brasher approach and brighter visual style loses some of the balance and refinement evident in the other members of the trio. Still, the action is also a lot more frantic which makes the proceedings even more devious than the already considerable challenge offered by the preceding games.

As with other arcade titles to make an appearance on the console, several options not available to arcade players become possible. The most obvious here are tweakable aspects such as difficulty settings and the decision to have continues or not. The inclusion of Dual Shock support is a commendable and significant one, though, adding a little extra to the proceedings.

More interesting is the now expected selection of different screen modes - normal makes the best use of the 4:3 ratio of the average television, while a narrow (but reduced due to the substantial black borders on either side) upright rectangular version approximates the arcade's original aspect ratio. But for those of you intent on recreating the full coin-op experience, then a third mode displays a full-screen rectangular image, playable so long as the set is turned on its side – not the easiest (or recommended) task if you happen to own a 32inch widescreen TV.

A host of artwork, profiles, cast lists of the different aircraft and bosses, tips and secrets (the latter available only after the completion of all three games) round off what is essentially an enjoyable and immensely playable package.

This is yet another retro pack to see the light of day in Japan first, but Capcom's recently formed, independent European arm might mean that the company takes the risk in officially releasing fairly low-key titles such as this in the west in the future.



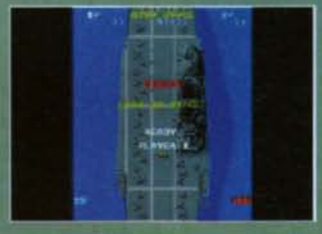






The brash visual style of *1943 Kai* (top row) may sit uneasily with devotees of Capcom's previous two World War II-inspired vertical shoot 'em ups







The three screen modes (from top): normal, pseudo-arcade, and the full coin-op recreation, which requires the TV to be on its side









While *1942* (top row) may have aged visually, its gameplay remains pleasantly sound. *Generation 1* also features several extras (above right)

Metal Gear Solid 1 & 2

The mainstream interest in what many are calling 'the game of the year' has completely obscured the fact that *Metal Gear Solid* is in fact the third in a popular series. **Edge** looks back at its sparkling 8bit predecessors



The original *Metal Gear* made an appearance on the NES (below) and MSX, and revealed stealth-heavy gameplay that would later be dragged into 3D on the PlayStation. *MG2* appeared on the NES and MSX2 (above)





It's difficult not to enjoy the irony in *Metal Gear Solid*'s near-universal billing as 'innovative'. Although it is, without question, easily one of the more inventive PlayStation titles in development, much of its heavily documented content can be traced back to its distant forebears – *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*.

On initial inspection, the original MSX/NES *Metal Gear* bears little resemblance to the recent 32bit update. But a moment's play reveals that the much-lauded 'stealth' aspect of *Metal Gear Solid* is an integral feature of protagonist Snake's debut.

With guards treading predefined or semi-random patrol routes, dextrous use of scenery is a prerequisite for players wishing to progress in this simple, yet involving adventure.

Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake is, however, a markedly more complex work. Part of its appeal is its interesting use of logical, almost 'realistic' puzzles. At one point, Snake must rescue a hostage. Rather than attempting a one-man attack, players must follow a guard to the captive's secret location, where a coded knock



from the unfortunate prisoner reveals Snake's next objective.

Sadly, *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*'s original MSX2 release suffered from its indigenous format's failure in the west, and an official conversion was deemed unworthy of the expenditure it would involve. It's a measure of *MG2*'s qualities, therefore, that a group of Web-based enthusiasts have created a Japanese-to-English conversion (see http://www.bekkoame.or.jp/i/takatemp/mgear2us.htm).

Those waiting for a western *Metal Gear Solid* might like to download the originals to play via an emulator. Given their advanced years, it's remarkable how compelling they remain – a fact that, in part, justifies the hype surrounding their successor.

Publisher: Konami	1987/89	Developer: In-house	MSX/MSX2

News

And still the waves of classic updates show no sign of abating, as Activision offers forth an update of what is perhaps the most famous name in videogaming history...

Following its unveiling of a full-blown update of *Asteroids*, Activision has revealed that an overhauled version of *Space Invaders* is on the cards. Although details are thin on the ground at present, it's understood that the team behind the project will be looking back to the original 1978 version and reworking from there rather than taking cues from the ill-advised update that original creator Taito undertook in 1990. Expect a release on the PC, PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and PC.

Microsoft, meanwhile, has announced *Pinball Arcade*, a retro package for the PC which promises to trace the history of the silver ball, replicating classic tables dating from the '30s right through to the '90s. It's not currently known what licensing deals have been put in place, but this is one long overdue initiative. **Edge** awaits the prospect of a perfect *Black Knight 2000* conversion with some expectation...

In hardware news, fans of the Commodore 64 will no doubt be pleased (although, like **Edge**, somewhat baffled) to hear of the format's resurrection in the form of Web.It, a new computer from Belgian manufacturer Web Computers International. The machine, featuring a 66-100Mhz CPU, is Windows 3.1 compatible and features Internet compatibility along with a full-blown C64 emulator allowing users to play 'lots of stunning Commodore 64 games'. Check out http://www.commodore64.com for more information.



The Web.It, from Web Computers International, is probably the oddest hardware launch in recent years. It may be music to the ears of surviving CBM64 fans, though





Technics SC-HD55 mini hi-fi system

£600 Contact: Panasonic/Technics UK 0500 404041

Not so long ago hi-fis and mini systems were without exception the ugliest bits of kit ever to grace the living room – angular blobs of black metal, alleviated only by the kind of flashing lights and knobbly bits 15-year-old acid freaks design when they're not pinching motors.

These days hi-fis and mini systems are a lot more designer-oriented. The retro silver look is in and nowhere is this more evident than with the Technics SC-HD55. This tiny hi-fi is cloaked in shiny aluminium, mirror-effect plastic and blue LEDs, making it look far more expensive than it actually is. Features-wise, the system features a 25W-per-channel amplifier, CD player, tuner and Dolby B cassette deck – each designed to look like tiny separates – and a pair of faux-wood speakers.

Although the SC-HD55 obviously can't compete with 'proper' hi-fis or even high-class minis such as TEAC and Denon's, it still makes a reasonable fist of any kind of music and is remarkably enjoyable to listen to. For the money it's a stunner and well worth a look.

Philips 42PW9982 Flat TV

£12,500 (approx., see High Street stockists) Contact: Philips 0181 665 6350

It's going to be a long time before most people can afford a wall-hanging telly, and maybe it's just as well – most simply don't offer the range of features and convenience we expect from ordinary CRT designs.

There are exceptions, though – namely the Thomson Wysius system **Edge** looked at last month and this, Philips' Flat TV. Now, while Thomson threw a Dolby Digital receiver, DVD player and VCR into its package, Philips' offering is simpler, delivering the most user-friendly and TV-like solution.

This much is obvious from the off. The Flat TV is the first 42inch plasma screen to offer a built-in TV tuner, Picture-in-Picture and Teletext, and comes with a variety of sound and picture technologies that arguably makes Philips TVs among the best in the world. The Flat TV is also notable for its series of user-friendly onscreen menus which make tuning in and setting up as pain-free as possible.

The only obvious disappointment is the sound – the Dolby Pro-Logic amplifier and speakers simply don't do the big screen justice. Add a decent A/V setup, though, and the Flat TV is simply telly heaven.





Philips Ilium GSM phone/Accent smartphone PDA

£150 (approx., including network connection)
Contact: Philips Consumer Communications 0645 282828

There's a Holy Grail of sorts going on in communications land at the moment as companies try to combine mobile phones with PDAs in a bid to provide complete 'mobile communications tools'. Nokia tried it first with the 9000 Communicator and has since been joined by Ericsson, Sharp and now Philips.

Philips' solution is unusual because the Ilium/Accent are meant to operate as separate items. The Ilium can either be used as a phone on its own or can be plugged into the hollowed-out body of the Accent PDA, giving access to goodies like email, Internet access and diary.

Sadly the result is only partially successful. The Ilium/Accent manages to be both bulky and power hungry, while some of the applications are common to both parts yet it is impossible to share information between them. However, entering data using the Accent's touch-screen display is relatively easy, the user-interface is simple and there's even a handwriting-recognition option for those who don't like to type. It won't be much use to *WinCE* fans, though – it uses Philips' own operating system.



Reality Quest PlayStation Glove

£50 Contact: Authorised PlayStation peripherals stockist

There's a seemingly endless supply of PlayStation peripherals flooding on to the market designed to enhance the gaming experience – from Dual Shock controllers to lightguns and dedicated pads for particular games – but the PlayStation Glove takes game control into a whole new arena.

Requiring just one hand to use, the Glove puts all essential controls at your fingertips, with a four-way axis switch enabling movement from side to side, back and forth. It initially appears ideal for games like *Tomb Raider 2* or *Quake*.

In practice the glove proves fearsomely tricky to use. It takes a lot of practice to get the hang of the button positions since they can't be seen once the glove is strapped on. The restricted wrist movement soon gets tiresome, too, leading to painful bouts of RSI. Manufacturer Reality Quest says that the glove should only be used for 50 minutes out of every hour of gameplay, but the wrist starts aching long before such an opportunity presents itself.







Sex, drugs and… No, we'll have none of that, thank you

UK: The videogame industry is notorious for using sex – in a pretty fundamental way – to sell games, as a quick glance at page 134 should prove. But when it comes to putting sexual imagery *into* a videogame, it seems that publishers can't bring themselves to take the plunge.

Sensible Software's now-abandoned title *Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* (the plug was pulled by GTI), was to have been a point-and-click adventure for the mature market. Following the exploits of a wannabe pop-star, the game featured explicit scenes of sex and drug taking. **Edge** doesn't condone such behaviour (well, the former isn't *sooo* bad…), but can't help wondering when 'mature' games will offer anything other than increasingly graphic violence.



Field of dreams?



"Hello? Yes, isn't this fun?" Hmmm. Not exactly **Edge**'s idea of a thrilling night out, but there's no accounting, etc…

UK: The concept of multiplayer gaming bars seems to be taking off. The first two bars to offer a heady brew of deathmatches and alcohol – Edinburgh's Reality-X and London's Shoot'n'Surf – have been joined by a new Capital-based pretender called The Playing Fields (see p54).

The Playing Fields claims to put a new spin on the gaming bar concept by concentrating solely on games and not offering punters the chance to surf the Internet.

According to co-owner Edward Watson, this is because accessing the Internet and running a quick, stable network require different sets of skills. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of The Playing Fields is that, even without the gaming side, it would hold its own as a pleasant bar to visit. It has staff on hand to provide sensible opposition for tyros and hardcore gamers, and works hard to eliminate mismatches. And the staff actually encourage whooping and hollering to generate a heightened multiplayer atmosphere, and claim not to mind if you spill beer on the keyboard.

By treating customers in an adult manner, the bar has hit on a very attractive formula. Costs range from £6 an hour down to £4.50 an hour depending on whether you take advantage of a multi-tiered membership system, and the 20 PCs run a varied selection of multiplayer games. The bar is keen to forge closer links with the industry, is willing to host corporate bashes and will even let game publishers hire PCs on a daily basis, allowing them to showcase their own software.

If the idea takes off – and it deserves to – the owners have ambitious plans to build a chain of similar bars spanning the UK over the next five years.











Still groovy after all these years

UK: Even though the PlayStation is now the best-selling console in the world, SCEE steadfastly refuses to let up on its flirtations with underground 'cultcha'. The company's sponsorship of events such as Glastonbury and Tribal Gathering is well known, but beneath that, the hardest working marketing department in the world has spent the last four years courting the more leftfield area of extreme sports.

This September alone saw Sony involved with two relatively offbeat ventures. On the 25th there was the PlayStation Night Surf Challenge – the world's first nocturnal surfing competition – taking place at Bude beach in Cornwall. One hundred of the UK's best competitors were due to turn up along with guest DJs and live bands (including drum'n'bass outfit Future Loop Foundation and indie band Gold Blade). Organisers were also planning a beach barbecue for spectators. (In September? Never mind.)

Two days later, the yoof culture bandwagon rolled on to Brixton Academy for the 1998 UK Breakdance Championships. This is the third year Sony has been involved with the event, and this time it promised a truly international line-up, with competitors from Japan, the US and Germany all due to take part.

Headlining acts set to appear alongside the dancers were old-skool rapper Kurtis Blow (of 'If I Ruled the World' fame) and the Buffalo Girls (with whom Malcom McLaren scored a hit in 1983). So long as all this doesn't lead to a rejuvenated interest in breakdance video games, **Edge** is quite happy.

Pocketing Pokemon

Japan: The Pokemon obsession took a new turn a few months ago when Nintendo released a portable Pocket Pikachu.

The unit, which owners could clip to their belts, behaves in a similar fashion to that most essential accessory of the fit and healthy, the pedometer.

Clocking up 'points' as their owners go about their everyday business (the internal sensors registering steps), Pocket Pikachus enjoy Tamagotchi-style existences, getting up in the morning, brushing their teeth, farting around doing pretty much nothing all day, and then hitting the sack in accordance with their real-world clocks. The key difference between these devices and Tamagotchis is that they don't require feeding.

Nintendo has more recently introduced a Hello Kitty version, based on the eponymous character which has been such a favourite with tack-loving westerners in recent years.

VMS Godzilla, all is forgiven…





Darling, I love you

Lonely tycoon with Ferrari and a private plane seeks fun-loving girlfriend to help him spend £100m fortune

MEET the ultimate fantasy guy, girls. The kind of combination that comes around about as often as Halley's Comet.

EXCLUSIVE

By SARAH ARNOLD

UK: Codemasters co-founder David Darling is looking for luuurve, according to the *News of the World*'s September 13 issue. Apparently the 'handsome' millionaire is ready to share his wealth. "I suppose I have everything a man could want," he said. "But now I'm searching for a special girl."

What, isn't there a cheat code for this kind of thing, Dave?









Ol' blue spines is back



Japan: In one of the summer's most eagerly awaited events, Sega's first Dreamcast title, *Sonic Adventure*, was revealed to a Japanese audience of over 13,000 gamers and press. Sega's classic mascot was demonstrated in all his 128bit glory in three separate shows on Saturday August 22, although the final showing was not as packed as its predecessors. The event was staged in the same 5,000-capacity auditorium utilised by Warp for its *D2* announcement (which attracted around 11,000 visitors). Tokyo's International Conference Centre is fast becoming synonymous with Sega's revival and its Dreamcast console, and has a grand scale to match the company's ambitions.

The usual Sega suspects were in attendance, including its charismatic and personable president Shoichiro Irimajiri who has been driving forward a new sense of openness within the company. Yukawa Hidekazu, the senior manager who recently starred in a series of bizarre Japanese television commercials for Sega (see **E**62), was also there. Following a short introduction by Irimajiri-san, in which he made an updated briefing on Dreamcast, it was left to *Sonic Adventure* producer Yuji Naka (interviewed last issue) to steal the show.

The Sonic Team leader arrived in outlandish fashion, his chosen transport nothing less than a gigantic egg which exploded to reveal Naka-san. After collecting a microphone, he presented a sequence of rapid clips from *Sonic Adventure*, projected onto a vast screen. However, instead of ploughing directly into the game announcement, Naka then introduced 'Sonic Team Story'; essentially a 'making of Sonic Adventure'.

Taking a light-hearted stance, the film was backed by the 'Austin Powers' theme and commenced with Yuji pulling up outside Sega's HQ in a Ferrari before going on to introduce the key figures of the Sonic Team. Clearly the implication from the music was that Sega and Sonic are awakening from a long sleep (as Austin Powers does in the movie). The film then went on to show the team on a 'research' trip to South America in November 1996 (who says game development is all work and no play?), visiting various locations such as the Tulum Pyramid Stairs. In another scene one of the team is heard remarking 'It's *Xevious*!' as they fly over the mysterious and massive Nazca markings in Peru. And – possibly to justify the cost of the trip to Irimajiri-san – comparative scenes from *Sonic Adventure* and shots of actual temples are shown in rapid succession, to good effect.

Following this, Yuji Naka then began a more serious run through the game (which is fully previewed on page 36), revealing notable details on how Sonic for Dreamcast will interact with the console's interesting VMS memory card system. Again displaying a remarkable similarity to the successful Tamagotchi/Pokemon model, as does the Godzilla Generations VMS, players will be able to download and 'rear' virtual creatures on the handheld. Quite how this will then be integrated back into the game isn't clear. **Edge** is looking forward to seeing how Sega and other Dreamcast developers will employ the VMS in (arguably) more interesting ways, although Irimajiri-san's earlier demonstration included a card game that hinted at other applications.

Perhaps the most significant moment of the *Sonic Adventure* showing was when Naka-san used what appeared to be a complete Dreamcast console to present the title in a playable form. He opened the



Sega Enterprises' likeable president Shoichiro Irimajiri was on hand to open the event







Huge crowds of almost 15,000 swarmed to the special *Sonic* presentation held over three showings in central Tokyo





Oh dear...

This really is a bit sad, isn't it?









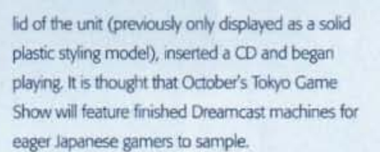
Sega mascots aplenty. Clockwise from left: manager-turned-advertising-star Yukawa Hidekazu; Sonic chum Tails; and Sega-san-shiro, who is seen strutting his stuff at most of Sega's corporate events







Nice work if you can get it: the Sonic Team (and their 'special' friends – centre) journeyed to South America on research



lid of the unit (previously only displayed as a solid plastic styling model), inserted a CD and began playing. It is thought that October's Tokyo Game Show will feature finished Dreamcast machines for eager Japanese gamers to sample.

Rather than simply running through selected stages of the game, Naka-san asked the audience to vote on which areas they would most like to see. This was done gameshow style, by measuring how loudly the accumulated attendees cheered for either Ice Camp, Red Mountain or Speed Highway. The latter was the easy winner due to its fast paced design, redolent of past Sonic outings, although Red Mountain was also given an airing. A similar measure of audience participation was then employed to sample an en-masse, rhythmic chanting of 'SO-NI-KU' by the more-than-willing crowd, which is due to appear in the finished version of the game.

While undoubtedly revealing *Sonic Adventure* and Dreamcast to be at the cutting edge of videogaming technology, and gathering a good number of interested otaku, the event left key questions unanswered. No mention was made of the console's modem facility, and while Sonic is a powerful brand in the west, his street cred is minimal in Japan. Other, better-known Sega brands will be needed to ensure that its graceful saviour is the success it so badly needs to be. Nonetheless, *Sonic Adventure* is a promising new member of the dream cast in Sega's big production.









Yuji Naka – and his game – made a big impact (main). Development doesn't look *too* stressful… (left)





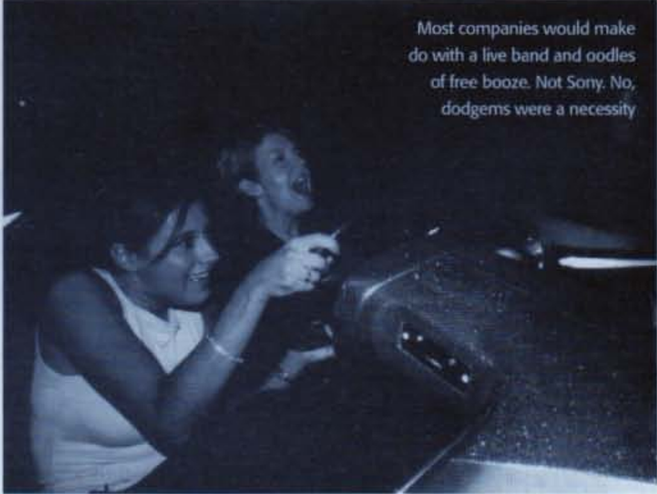
How to throw a party, the Sony way

Jarvis and friends got to strut their stuff at a party destined to be described by *The Sun* as 'the biggest gathering of geeks ever' (or something like that – **Edge** couldn't be arsed to check the story, frankly)

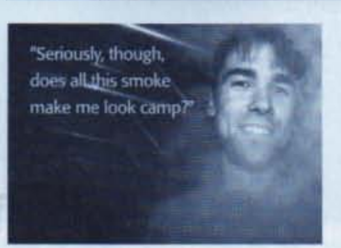
UK: This year's ECTS may have been a sound showcase for products, but the other side of the coin – the free parties – were a bigger attraction than the show itself for many. Sony's bash was by far the most extravagant: attendees arriving at the soiree were transported via golf cart to the action (which took place inside an enormous, hangar-like building). Sony Music stars Pulp provided the tunes later on. A top night indeed.



Sony Computer Entertainment Europe chief, Chris Deering. Enjoying himself



Most companies would make do with a live band and oodles of free booze. Not Sony. No, dodgems were a necessity



"Seriously, though, does all this smoke make me look camp?"



PlayStation pods were on hand. Phew

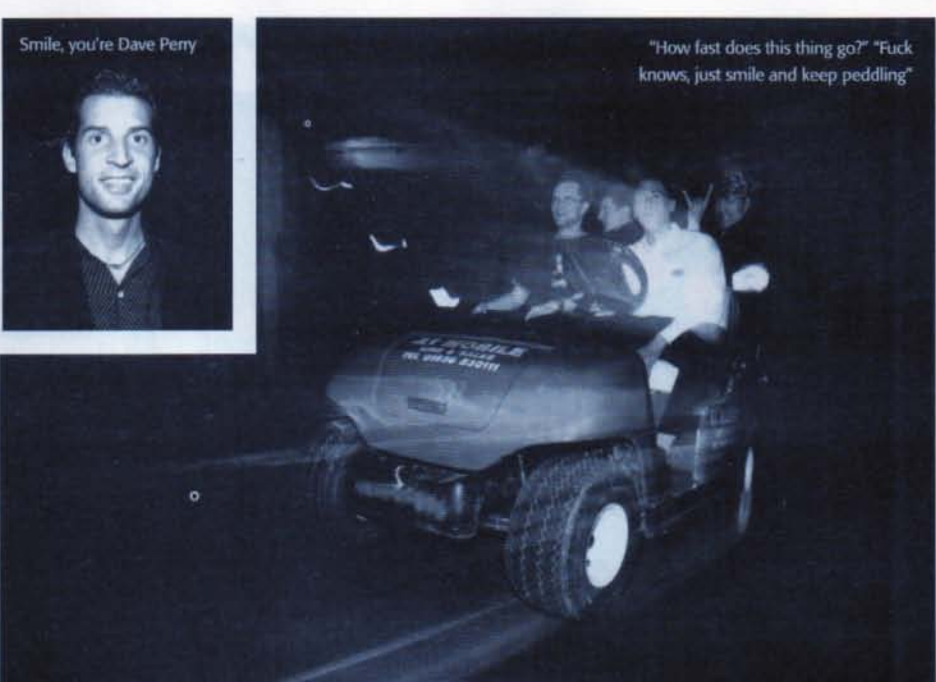




Sony's party – which, if estimates are to be believed, was the most expensive in ECTS history – was graced with all manner of guests, from battle-worn programmers, to high-living sales and marketing types, to contented-looking big cheeses. And where did **Edge** fit into all of this? Quite comfortably at the bar, thanks.


Smile, you're Martin Nicebloke from Gremlin Interactive

Smile, you're Dave Perry


"How fast does this thing go?" "Fuck knows, just smile and keep peddling"

Anything you can do...


We have nothing to fear but the chandelier falling on our heads


"Does my personality look small in this?"


Stay off the drugs, son


"Does my head look big in this?"


Budding guitarists flocked in their droves

UK: In a brave (although some might say 'daft') move, Eidos hosted a party on the same night as Sony's bash – at London's Café de Paris. Arriving at around 12 midnight to find a gargantuan queue waiting outside (and VIP passes about as much value as Bill Clinton at a feminist rally), **Edge** decided to return later. Upon return, the sordid underbelly of the videogames industry took no time in revealing itself. Suffice it to say, free booze + software types + cheesy music (supplied by the same band Eidos used at E3 – flown in especially for the occasion, no less) = a big mess.

Here's to next year's ECTS parties being rather less offensive.





ECTS: A bluffer's guide to marketing techniques...











Remember girls, a toothy grin and you're on to a winner. Perhaps the most disturbing of all the sights at ECTS (and there were a fair few) was the queue of, ahem, 'young gentlemen' waiting to have their picture taken with 'the real Lara Croft'. An embarrassing costume mix-up left the *Fifth Element* team with no choice but to go *au naturel*...

UK: After an extensive survey into the way ECTS works, **Edge** presents ten pointers for prospective software publishers to bear in mind when planning their presence at next year's event:

1. If demoing a PC title, make sure the machine crashes every time anyone comes to have a look. Also, be sure to have an overworked PR person on hand to look embarrassed and repeatedly promise that this won't happen when the game finally ships.

2. As ECTS only attracts 24,000 people, it really isn't necessary to make the passageways between the banks of monitors on your stand more than two-feet wide.

3. If you employ a group of scantily clad models to hang about at your stand, make sure they loiter right in the entrance – they will inevitably attract a massive crowd of testosterone-fuelled men who rarely encounter pretty girls, therefore rendering it virtually impossible for anyone to actually have a look at the games on offer.

4. Always boast that you have the best 3D engine/AI (delete as appropriate) anywhere in the world. No one else on any of the other stands will be saying the same thing.

5. Similarly, be careful to point out the variety of exciting 3D features your product includes. If it doesn't include any, lie or fabricate from scratch. None of your visitors will know what environment mapping is anyway.

6. It is considered vulgar in the modern software industry to mention gameplay. If you have accidentally allowed any of this into your product, simply remove it before ECTS begins, and replace it with a healthy dose of environment mapping.

7. Remember, if your game somehow combines two or more familiar and well-worn genres, then it can be referred to as 'innovative and original'.

8. If you employ any out-of-work actors to don 'hilarious' game character suits, make sure they are led around the show hall by surly 16-year-old girls who would clearly rather be sitting outside MacDonalds smoking Silk Cuts.

9. If you have a VIP balcony as part of your stand, fill it with marketing men in sharp suits who shout into mobile phones all day, frequently checking their watches but never actually going anywhere.

10. If you are organising an after-show party, don't forget to invite three times as many people as the venue is capable of holding. Also, start a rumour that All Saints will be there. They wouldn't be seen dead and rotting within 300 miles of said party, of course, but no one will figure this out until it's too late.





Konami boxes clever

Japan: There are currently two ways of buying *Metal Gear Solid* (see p78) on the high streets of Tokyo: the 'normal' way (handing over ¥5,800 and getting the bog-standard, normal-sized box and contents) or the 'special' way, which sees ¥9,800 exchanging hands for the so-called Premium Package.

The Premium Package's box contains the game (on two CDs, as standard), a *Suikoden 2* demo CD (again, standard issue with the normal release), a *Metal Gear Solid* dog tag (bearing the legend 'FOX-HOUND S.F.G. SINCE 1987'), a frankly tacky T-shirt, a soundtrack CD (containing the weedy music from the first two 8bit *Metal Gear* games – see p125) and, perhaps most importantly to the hardcore collector, an artwork book full of stunning designs. Konami promises a limited-edition special pack for the UK release, but don't expect anything like this.





CHILDREN OF DUB
Digital Mantras
(Magick Eye)
The name may suggest some didgeridoo-laden tosh, but Children of Dub have always been as fascinated by house and sample-driven techno as dub. This, their fourth album, throws in stronger drum'n'bass elements, lending the likes of opener 'Feeling has Gone' an edginess that sits well alongside the world music stylings of 'Surya'. It's a surprisingly good combination thanks to subtlety and a rare ear for a good old-fashioned melody.





THE SOUND OF THE UNDERGROUND – LATIN HOUSE
Mixed by DJ Norty Cotto
(Master Dance Tones)
After compilations showcasing the scenes in Ibiza, Chicago, the UK and even LA, the series heads into hugely promising territory with a set from New York's Cotto, a DJ who's worked on tracks for Soul II Soul, The Beloved, Alison Limerick, and rapper KRS-1. It's hard to imagine house beats getting steamier than this. Big names are absent, but such considerations hardly matter on a CD seemingly designed to spark orgies.



LIVE AND RARE
Various
(F Communications)
Launched to mark the 100th release from France's premier dance label, this double-CD brings together the excellent St Germain, Frederic Galliano and others, each turning in rare or live (obvious, really) cuts at the jazzier end of the spectrum. The second disc is a more techno-flavoured outing, which later passes the baton to showstopper Laurent Garnier. Ambient and hard-edged electronica from Scan X, Nova Nova et al round things off in style, by which time most will be flipping right back to CD 1 again.



SUSHI 4004
Various
(Bungalow)
Bungalow's second compilation of Japan clubpop follows on from last year's 'Sushi 3003'. With sounds ranging from supreme dancefloor cheese to übercool Sino-bigbeat, most of the artists remain unknown outside Japan, although the likes of Pizzicato 5 and Denki Groove's Yoshinori Sunahara are guaranteed to fill stadiums on home soil. An eclectic, contemporary treat.

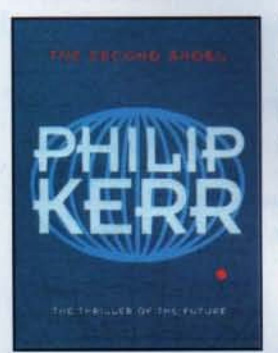
NEW RULES FOR THE NEW ECONOMY
Author: Kevin Kelly
Publisher: 4th Estate
ISBN: 1 85702 871 6

'The times they are a changing' sang Dylan in the '60s. Thirty years on Kevin Kelly is repeating the words, but to a different tune. The new wave is softly exchanging the tangible for the intangible. Atoms are on the way out, relationships, information and ideas are creating a new global economy that is quickly reaching a tipping point of no return. It is time to get with the new program, man.

Fundamentally there is nothing new in this proposition. As a founding editor of *Wired*, Kelly has been spreading such ideals for the past five years. Indeed much of the economic justification for his vision seems to have crystallised this year as *Wired* has become increasingly aggressive in its prediction of a golden age; the so-called 'Long Boom'.

Basing his arguments around ten rules that maximise networks and the opportunities they create, ('plenitude not scarcity, from places to spaces'), Kelly suggests the new economy will completely change the way we work and live. The 21st century may have found its newest prophet.

THE SECOND ANGEL
Author: Philip Kerr
Publisher: Orion
ISBN: 0 75281 443 5



There has always been a grandiose element to the books of Philip Kerr. More than just a techno-thriller author, he moves within the scientific mores of the times, stretching fiction into science faction, sprinkling his stories with sociological angst and intellectual games.

The year is 2069 and the world has become ravaged by a slow-acting blood-borne disease that can be cured only by a complete transfusion. With one litre worth $1.8 million, the world's biggest bloodbank, The First National, is also the best defended. Dallas knows this because he designed the security systems. Now, on the run from his former employers, he plans a break-in.

On its own this could be gripping stuff, but Kerr does not seem to care about the plot, let alone the characters. Instead, he concentrates on a couple of peculiar narrative devices and initially they are just confusing. A swarm of footnotes bedevil the opening chapters, detailing everything from latin word derivations to the workings of future mechanical devices. There are also bizarre sub-chapters where an undisclosed omniscience addresses the reader directly. Eventually everything does become clear, and there is brilliance in the conclusion, but overall the effect is disconcerting.

INTERNET
Site: ARRGH!
URL: http://www.arrgh.co.uk/index.html
There are dozens of sites dedicated to old games on the Net, but few come close to ARRGH! when it comes to keeping on top of developments on the scene. ARRGH! (an acronym for Anally Retentives Retro Games Home) features a mailing-list facility (which, naturally, automatically updates subscribers when major alterations occur at the site), classic hardware and software sections, articles, and downloadable stuff (including a selection of clever Sinclair-style fonts and animated GIFs), plus loads more besides. The Internet is home to the freakiest of retro fans, and ARRGH!'s maintainer seems no less hardcore than most. The result is a reliable site whose attention to detail is matched only by its willingness to appreciate the value in, say, the recently announced *Loderunner 2* (i.e. a brand-new title in all but name).





VIEWPOINT

EXPRESS YOURSELF IN **EDGE** – WRITE TO: LETTERS, **EDGE**, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW (email: edge@futurenet.co.uk)

Is it me or are games getting really boring these days? In the past two months I have sold my PlayStation and N64 because there just aren't any games worth playing.

The final straw was *F-Zero X*. I just can't understand why everyone thinks it's amazing. I was really looking forward to some *very* high-paced racing but it's so dull. Where's the stunning speed? The more I stuck at it to access the faster vehicles the more frustrated and bored I got. Even the multiplayer mode isn't as good as most.

Oh well, I must be getting old. Everything to me seems like repeats, with better graphics, but less gameplay. Except *GoldenEye* and *Gran Turismo*, of course.

My mate has just bought a Spectrum. It is sheer heaven.

Daniel Sinclair, via email

It's probably just you.

In response to Girish Mekwan's letter in **E**63, I'd disagree that the character of Raj in *Diddy Kong Racing* was portrayed in a racist manner. Surely as the character was of such good nature, it could in no way be derogatory to the area of the world that he came from.

When a negative attitude is associated with a particular group of people, we call it prejudice, and when this is used to harmful effect it is racism. It would be tragic if colourful characters such as Raj had to be removed simply on the basis that their accents represented a real group of people.

When Mario appears with an Italian accent ('It's a-me, Mario!'), although corny, I did not view it as a reflection on all Italians. And Dick Van-Dyke's cockney accent in 'Mary Poppins' caused me no offence, and only served to embarrass the actor.

I'm sure that Rare meant no offence when creating Raj and others in *Diddy Kong* and *Banjo-Kazooie*, and I hope that games like these can be viewed in the way that they were intended. A game is just for fun, and adding characters with personality and different voices just adds to this. Surely it would have been worse to have a Genie with an English, French or American accent?

Nathan Baseley, via email

Jeez, looks like the world still isn't ready for non-caucasian stereotypes, then (I'm talking about Girish Mekwan's letter in issue 63, of course).

I guess we'll just have to keep taking the piss out of ourselves until everybody else is mature enough to join in…

Iain Howe, via email

So the N64 has been only just keeping its head above water this year, with very few new titles and even fewer of quality. In the face of a new super-machine from Sega, and possibly the PlayStation 2 on the horizon, how can it survive?

There are promising signs that general game quality is improving, especially among thirdparties. We can look forward to titles such as *Turok 2*, *Body Harvest*, *Space Station Silicon Valley*, *Extreme G 2*, *Wipeout 64*, *Micro Machines*, *Shadowman*, *Castlevania 64*, as well as of course *Zelda*, *Donkey Kong*, *Banjo-Kazooie 2*, *Perfect Dark* and *Jet Force Gemini* in the reasonably near future.

There's also talk of a *Tomb Raider* game, secret Rare projects, and news of other games further from release, such as the new *Duke Nukem* game and *Rogue Squadron*. In short, there are a lot of promising releases to watch for.

'Although a sensible strategy at the moment is to make games for a **standard Nintendo 64** (but have the capability to be enhanced by extra RAM), eventually we will get into a **ZX Spectrum** situation'

But in the long term how can the N64 compete? Developers will undoubtedly gradually improve their knowledge of how to get the best from the machine, but one would guess that Nintendo and Rare must almost be at that point by now, and I believe we can now consider the 64DD project dead, at least in the UK. I think a speedy release of an add-on RAM pack either by Nintendo or a thirdparty will enormously help the machine's overall prospects. It should be cheap enough that it will have a high take-up rate, especially if some killer apps are designed to take advantage of it (we already know *Turok 2* and possibly others do). Although a sensible strategy at the moment is to make games that run on the standard machine (but have the capability to be enhanced by extra RAM), eventually we will get to a ZX Spectrum 16K-versus-48K situation with most publishers only making games for the higher-specced system. This depends, of course, on how many people buy the extra RAM, but if it's made cheap enough, and marketed properly, it would achieve high market penetration quickly. One could even envisage, sometime next year, base consoles being sold with 8Mb RAM as standard.

Dr Alan Choo-Kang, via email

The 4Mb add-on is one of the most interesting developments in the N64's history – only time will tell if users are as willing to purchase one as they have been other units (such as the Rumble Pak, for example).

Incidentally, **Edge** understands that the N64's internal architecture puts a maximum of 4Mb on external RAM additions.



The 3DO Multiplayer: more reliable than the PlayStation, according to Chris Van Graas

You created a source of mystery by talking about three different prices for the Dreamcast console. At a certain point you say that Sega is trying to keep the price of the machine below £200, and that is one of the reasons it is considering removing the modem from the European version. But in another article in the same issue you mention prices like £249 and £300. Which do you think is the most realistic for Europe?

I don't think Sega should remove the modem for the European version, because it will split the format and will make developers wary about using the modem capabilities, since Europeans would not be able to fully enjoy the game on a standard machine. For the modem to be a success, Sega needs thirdparty software to make use of it. They should swallow a loss on the modem in Europe in the first six months or so, to keep the price of the machine low. But with the rate at which modem prices are dropping, including one should not necessarily make the machine too expensive in the future. What do you think?

Stijn de Witt,
via email

£200 is a fair bet. Regarding modem inclusion, it's partly a cost issue, but you also have to bear in mind that Sega does not have the experience with online gaming networks in Europe that is does in, say, the US. **Edge** will be very surprised if the machine goes on sale here next year complete with a modem.

Thanks for finally setting the record straight about your game reviews [E61]: it's about time people learned that five out of ten is average, not crap.

One out of ten is crap, however – which *Computer Success* (the apparently 'no nonsense' PC mag) awarded *Final Fantasy VII*.

LJ,
via email

Do you have any information regarding Sony's PlayStation 2? I can't imagine that Sony does not have specs, info or mock-ups for its new console (if it wants to keep up with Sega, that is).

I have a new PC (spec: P2 MMX, 300MHz, 64Mb SDRAM, 6.4Gb HD, Voodoo 2, AWE64 sound card, 17inch monitor) and I was wondering if PlayStation 2 could be more powerful. With Dreamcast screenshots looking so much like PC Voodoo 2 mock-ups, it's made me think that the gulf may not be that great.

Ronald Kattevilder,
via email

Concrete details regarding PlayStation 2 are nowhere to be had. In fact, from Sony's own perspective, it's still not even admitting the existence of the project. (Although **Edge** did 'accidentally' see the words 'PlayStation 2' written by hand on a convoluted, sales projection-style diagram on a presentation board at Sony's European HQ recently...)

I'm writing to you about an article I saw posted on the Internet recently, entitled 'Is the PlayStation defective?' I have been a PlayStation owner since it was first released in Japan (I was one of those people that forked out the big $$$s to be the first in their street to own one!), and throughout my PlayStation's life I have found it to have suffered a lot of 'wear 'n' tear' – a lot more than any of my other consoles (3DO, SNES, Nintendo 64 – although, granted, the two Nintendo consoles have far less moving parts than the 3DO or the PlayStation). A lot of my friends who own PlayStations agree with me that there are definitely defects in the design of the machine that cause it to break down after a long period of time (overheating is its major problem).

I think this might make a very interesting topic for you to write about, as you have always been mature and fair about your features while still managing to come from a gamer's perspective. And besides, this would probably be the perfect article as a comeback to all of those people who write in saying things along the lines of 'Why are you always kissing Sony's arse?'

Chris Van Graas,
via email

After the problems **Edge** has experienced with office PlayStations in the past few years, kissing arse is hardly on the agenda. (Home machines generally appear more reliable – probably because they're not always being 'borrowed'.) Any more readers care to comment?

'A lot of my friends who own PlayStations agree with me that there are **definitely defects** in the design of the machine that cause it to **break down** after long periods of time'

After reading about Sega of Europe's decisions regarding the release of Dreamcast, I was dismayed that there will be nearly a full year between the release in Japan and here. I find their reasoning to be fairly sound, with the N64's release going off with something of a whimper rather than the intended bang, but this still leaves me feeling that the European market is being treated like a third-rate market.

Nintendo were lucky with the N64 release. They managed to keep hold of most of the 'real' gamers, even with the slipping of their home release, and their release in Europe. Plus, with the 'cute' titles they had available they managed to snag some areas of the market which machines like the PlayStation have not yet managed to reach, but since the release in Europe they have had to rely on releasing poor-quality games, with only wonderful games by Rare underlying the machine's quality. I just hope that Sega do not end up relying on superior arcade conversions as they did with the Saturn. This limiting, as Nintendo are at the moment experiencing, will harm them, which I for one would not like to happen.

Then of course there's Sony's next machine, which could topple Sega again. With the current installed base all they need is backwards compatibility and they could well do it.

John Bright,
via email

Backwards compatibility? What do you think this is, an industry that makes some kind of sense?

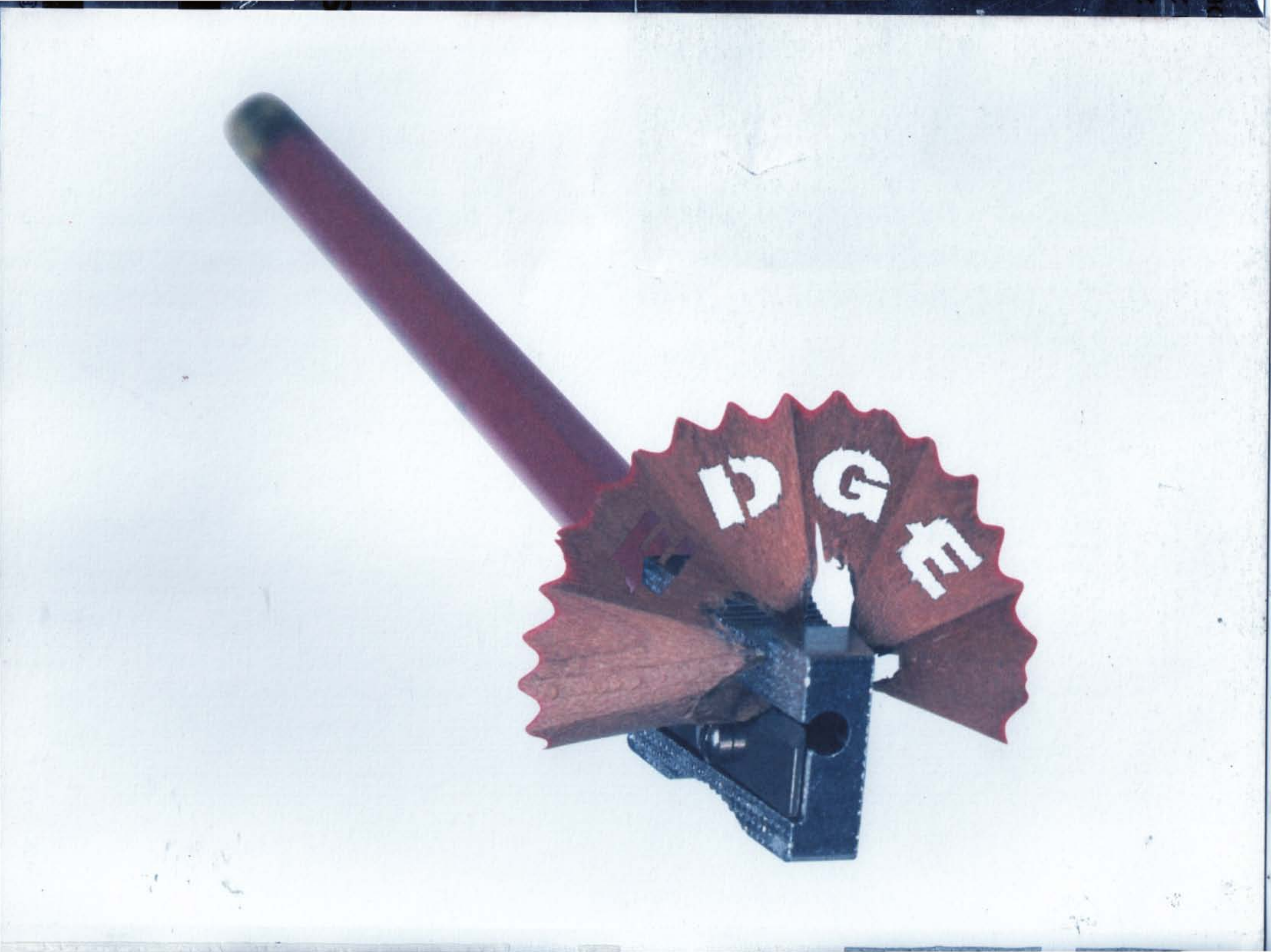


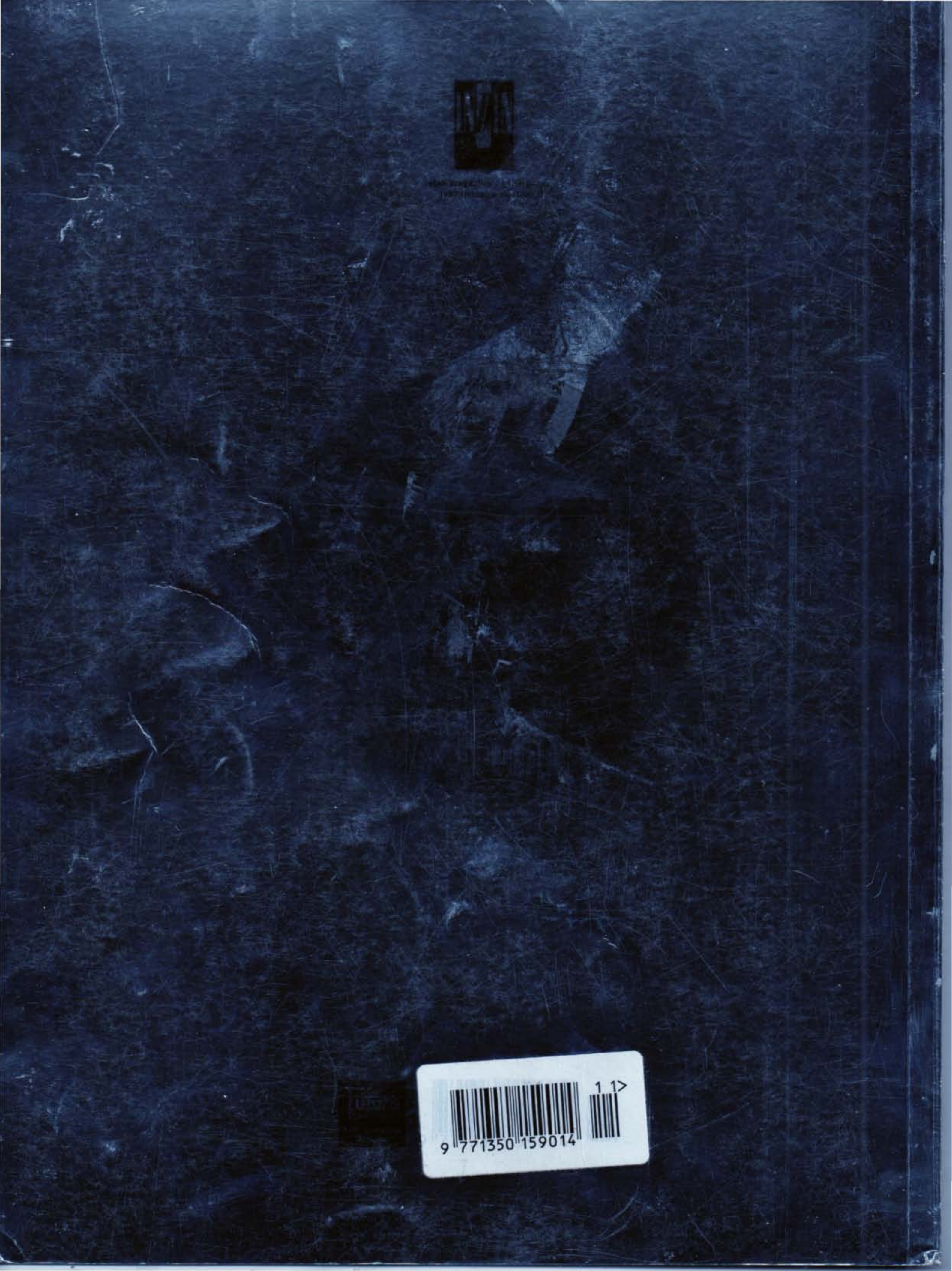
BLACK AND WHITE

Peter Molyneux, widely regarded as the father of god games, is taking the genre to its next level with *Black and White*, the first title to come out of the unproven Lionhead Studios. Next month he talks exclusively to **Edge** about the new technology his team is building in order to realise a dream. Other magazines have talked about the project; only **Edge** brings you world-exclusive screenshots and the *full* lowdown on one of 1999's biggest titles.



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